

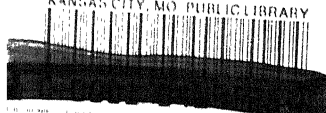
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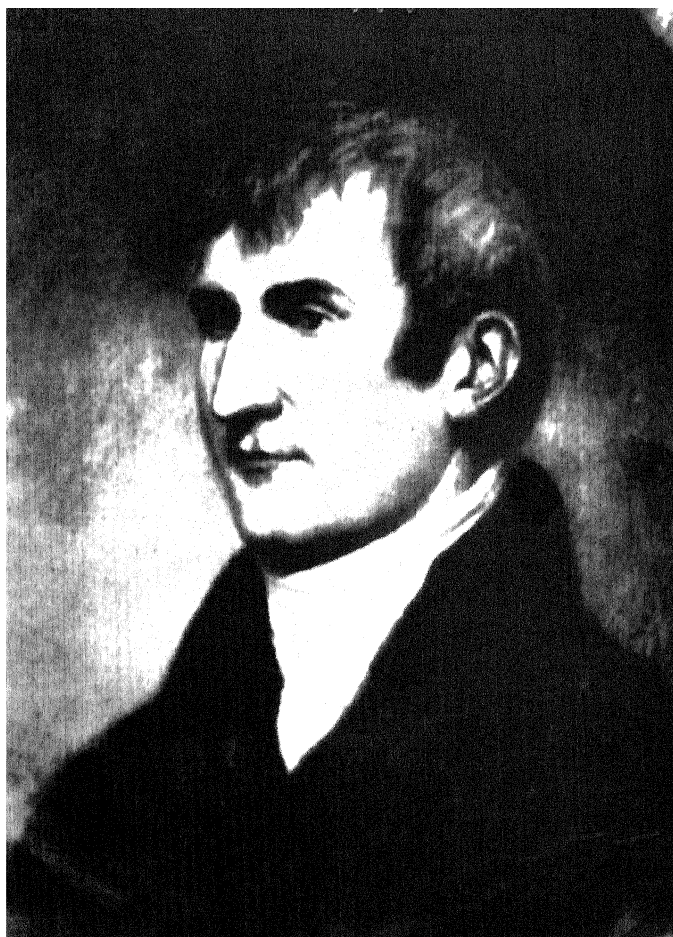


MERIWETHER LEWIS

*Cultivators of the earth make the best citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most virtuous and the most independent. They are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests with the most lasting bonds. As long, therefore, as they can find employment in that line, I would not counsel them to be mariners, artisans or anything else.*

—THOMAS JEFFERSON.





*Brown Brothers*

MERIWETHER LEWIS

# MERIWETHER LEWIS

*of* LEWIS and CLARK

*by*

CHARLES MORROW WILSON

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS  
AND MAPS*

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY  
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To my Father  
JOSEPH DICKSON WILSON



## PREFACE

**S**URPRISINGLY little has been written about Capt. Meriwether Lewis of Albemarle, although this great pioneer of a great frontier had been locally prominent during the ten years preceding his death, and the successful completion of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific made him nationally so. His country accorded him applause, homage, and tribute, for Meriwether Lewis was the most outstanding trail-blazer and hero of his day—the Charles Augustus Lindbergh of 1807.

I once knew a country newspaper editor who, in addressing college journalism classes, supplemented text-book instruction with very practical advice. He told them that instead of following complex formulas for prying out information, the best way to learn anything is to observe first, then to inquire; that if one wants to know about a person, it is best first to ask that individual, and if he won't talk, to get in touch with his closest friend.

I followed that advice in writing this book. I gave first attention to all Meriwether Lewis's own writings—his journals, diaries, and letters, many of which have been preserved. The late Hayden Anderson, of Ivy Depot, Va., probably the last relative of the great frontiersman, succeeded in making a most valuable collection of Lewis's private letters;

## PREFACE

besides, in his colorful Army career Meriwether Lewis contributed generously to the files of the War Department, and as secretary to Thomas Jefferson, Lewis's distinctive spelling, style, and philosophy found prominent place among State Department documents and in the vast correspondence of Thomas Jefferson.

In the course of his expedition to the Pacific, Lewis, under order from Jefferson, wrote a diary covering more than three hundred and fifty days, and his comrade, William Clark, wrote an even more comprehensive journal. Most of this writing is preserved in the original by the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, of which both Lewis and Jefferson were members. Finally, as Governor-general of the vast Territory of Louisiana the great majority of Lewis's letters and reports are on file.

I feel gratified to express my appreciation of the work of the late Dr. Reuben Gold Thwaites, of the United States Department of the Interior, for his scholarly and brilliantly edited compilation of the *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (Dodd, Mead, 1905, 8 vols.) It includes all available journals of Lewis and Clark from inception to completion of the great expedition. It is really more helpful in some ways than the original manuscripts, for the latter have been woefully abused by being mutilated and scrawled and scratched upon, which seriously impairs the usefulness of these otherwise invaluable documents.

## PREFACE

I am glad also to express my gratitude to the courteous and efficient staff of the Library of Congress, which dealt with me long and patiently, giving me ready access to numerous unused files. Like appreciation is felt for the services of Miss Jim P. Matthews, assistant librarian, University of Arkansas, who helped me borrow books from public libraries throughout the country, showing exceptional interest in the undertaking.

My grateful thanks are tendered to: Col. R. L. Maddox, U. S. Army, retired, military authority and profound student of American history and letters; Col. Bernard Lentz, Office of the Chief of Infantry, U. S. Army, eminent student and interpreter of military history, a close and respected friend; and Sgt. Maj. George Forst, Third Infantry, outstanding authority on Army regulations, present and past.

Library of Congress collections of American State Papers of 1801-1809, particularly those relating to military affairs, have proved valuable corollary reading, as have Ford's *Writings of Thomas Jefferson* and the fine collection of Jeffersonian letters and papers compiled and published by the Jefferson Memorial Association. Dr. Elliott Coues, who edited the first authentic transcript of the long-hand journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, likewise presented four valuable volumes on the great tour of discovery.

Generous aid was given through permission to use three excellent manuscript and letter treasures

## PREFACE

—the Draper, the Anderson, and the Voorhis collections. Publications of the State historical associations of Missouri, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Kentucky were also referred to, and several other sources are cited in the course of the text.

The task of assembling so much divergent material (some of it from sources much neglected or seldom, if ever, consulted) and of correlating, verifying, and weaving the whole into a life's story, has not been a simple one. Lewis and Clark had a way of borrowing each other's phraseology verbatim, including misspellings and unfinished sentences, but luckily their handwritings are highly individual.

Poetic philosopher that he was, the captain was not a particularly coherent writer, and his journals and letters continually disclose picturesque lapses in grammar and spelling, as well as naïve and revealing self-contradictions, all of which I have sought to convey, and I hope the reader may gain at least a measure of my own delight in the company and personality of the charming Meriwether Lewis.

—CHARLES MORROW WILSON

*Fayetteville, Arkansas*  
*January, 1934*

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# Meriwether Lewis

## CHAPTER I

### FRANCE YIELDS HER TERRITORY

THE place was New Orleans; the time noonday, Monday, the twenty-ninth of December, 1803. The United States was taking over the Louisiana Territory.

The crowd was there, Place d' Armes was crowded with townsmen and shore-leave sailors. The Military was there, too, a detachment from the First Regiment, United States Army, in the act of being changed from foreign to domestic duty.

The ceremony of transfer was in charge of Captain Marcus Irving, U. S. Army, who commanded a detail of about thirty soldiers. Captain Irving chose to fire a cannon. His troopers dragged a muzzle-loader to the foot of the flagstaff, rammed a generous helping of gunpowder into its stubby maw, and stood at attention. When the fitting moment came, Corporal Henderman lit the fuse. The cannon roared a shattering salute, along with a dense fog of powder smoke.

The Tricolor of France began to descend and soon the Stars and Stripes waved from the high tip of the mast. The territory of Louisiana, a million square miles of wilderness, was part of the United

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

States; the mouth of the Mississippi was officially free; the tide of American immigration was at liberty to enter upon what was then, as it probably is now, the largest continuous belt of farmable land in all the world. The crowd cheered and waved hats and handkerchiefs. Liquor and mirth and gallant sentiments flowed freely. In New Orleans they had been flowing freely for a considerable spell; but here was good reason for another drink.

The Territory of Louisiana was bought, lock, stock and barrel; rivers, mountains, prairies, ports, and forests. The present states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, most of Idaho and Montana, and considerable parts of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming, were included in this territory. The United States of America was doubled in landed possession. The greatest real-estate transaction in American history was duly completed.

Thomas Jefferson, pioneer in democracy, had said: "Cultivators of the earth make the best citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most virtuous and the most independent. They are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests with the most lasting bonds. As long, therefore, as they can find employment in that line, I would not council them to be mariners, artisans or anything else."

[Thomas Jefferson was repeating his prime incen-

## FRANCE YIELDS HER TERRITORY

tive in the purchase of Louisiana—to make the American Commonwealth preponderantly agricultural; to insure its growth through virtually limitless reserve of fertile earth.

New Orleans, southmost capital of the Territory, was three months ahead of St. Louis, the northernmost capital, in celebrating transfer to the United States. St. Louis, sleepy village with pelt rows and saloons, fringes of stolid brick mansions, and hinterlands of pressing wilderness, was opposed to undue haste in making celebration at stray rumors.

Captain Amos Stoddard of the First Regiment of Infantry, United States Army, received orders on the ninth of March, 1804, to serve as American transfer commissioner for the port of St. Louis. At the time Stoddard was commanding Kaskaskia, the United States' most western Army post.

The Captain, his adjutant, Lieutenant Stephen Worrell, and a detail of eight enlisted men, boarded a barge, rowed across the Mississippi and proceeded afoot to the Spanish governor's house, where that dignitary, whose name was Charles Debault de Lassus, read an oath releasing all colonials from allegiance to Spain, and another oath releasing the town and all its citizenry from fidelity to France, courteously inferring that they had any to either. That done, the governor, in company with Captain Stoddard, signed the letter of transfer.

The transaction was modestly direct. There was no cannon fire, no flag-raising, no cheering. The squad of soldiers waited in attentive silence, late

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

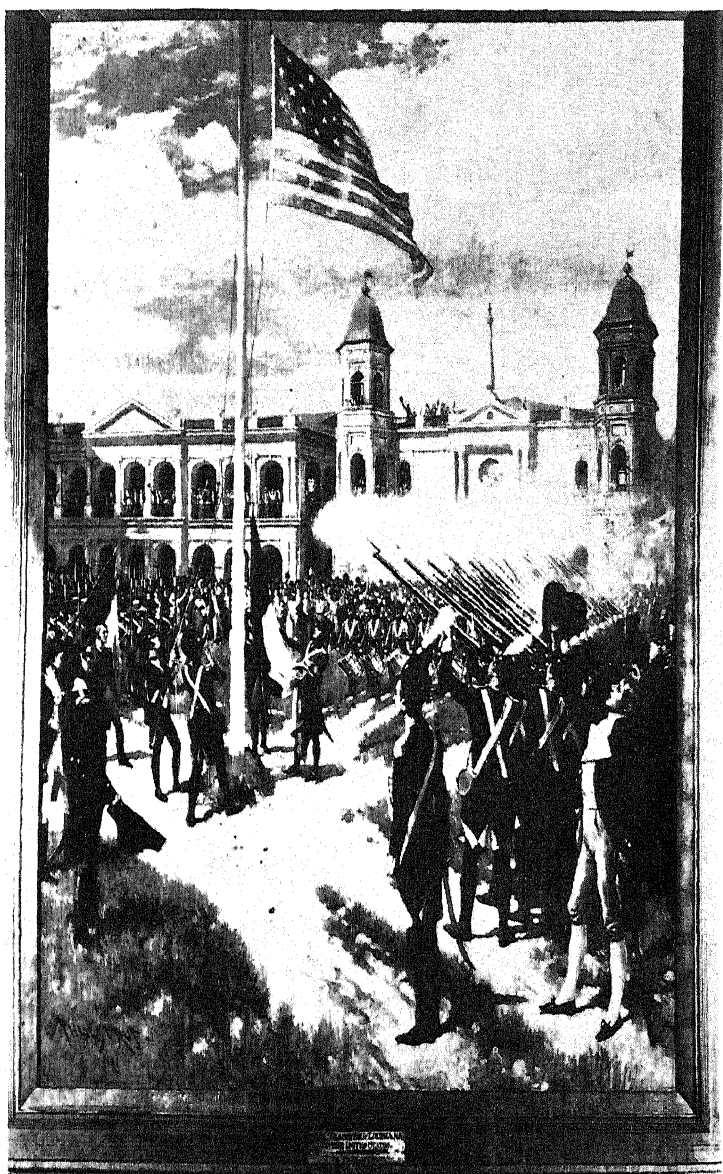
winter sunlight reflecting the magnificence of their brass-buttoned and gold-belted uniforms, their scarlet-trimmed capes, their shiny black boots. Captain Stoddard and Lieutenant Worrell wore dress uniforms, generous-lengthed sabres, shoulder capes and coats marked with brocadings of scarlet, as became officers of a poor but well-dressed army.

Then another Army man strolled into the official circle—a more youthful captain, six feet one, and straight as a white-oak. This officer also was handsomely tailored and he carried a sabre with a golden hilt. Any onlooker with an eye for detail would have noticed that the newcomer's bearing was one of elegance; that his luxurious black hair challenged the repose of his three-cornered hat; that his rather heavy, clearly-cut features were darkened by weather; that his eyes were slate-grey and played over with magnificent silence; that his lips bore a suggestion of meditative sadness.

Captain Stoddard and Lieutenant Worrell greeted the brother officer and introduced him to His Excellency, Charles Debault de Lassus, who had been Governor of Louisiana by the grace of Spain and the forbearance of France.

Charles Debault de Lassus, still Governor by royal appointment albeit he now had no country to govern, proceeded to remake the acquaintance of Captain Meriwether Lewis, First Regiment, United States Infantry, until recently secretary to Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Billon, Frederic L., *Annals of St. Louis, Acts of Transfer*. (1886), pp. 360-62.



*Brown Brothers*

## TRANSFER OF LOUISIANA TERRITORY

(From a painting by T. De Thulstrup)





## FRANCE YIELDS HER TERRITORY

In St. Louis, Meriwether Lewis was being accepted as a significant young man. He had drawn kindly notice from the fur merchants and frontier planters who made up the village's elect. He had danced and drunk with beaux and belles of the better families. What was more, he had loitered about the river-fronts, talking with voyagers and water men who had navigated the far-branching rivers. He had exchanged greetings with vagrant Indians who strolled townward to swap pelts and crops for the white man's whiskey and gunpowder. He had studied the river's depth, the rise and fall of its waters. He had taken canoeing trips up-river without making a clear explanation of his destination or purpose.

Such St. Louisans who knew him were kindly disposed toward this young army man from Washington town. The Virginian was close-lipped but nevertheless suited to good company. He was tall and strong and good to look upon. He danced well, drank well, and listened well. His amiability was never aggressive.

Meriwether Lewis was charming company, and his official scope added to his social charms—an officer of the United States Army, a Virginia gentleman, a confidant of the powers of the government at Washington; and what was more than all that—commander-elect of an expedition which was to penetrate all the mighty Territory of Louisiana—westward to the great Pacific.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FRIEND OF JEFFERSON

THE year 1774 was dotted with blood-red stars. New England was muttering protests against taxes levied by England, who was losing mightily upon American colonies. France was hating England; Spain was fearing France; while England was recruiting both her army and her navy and making an exceedingly bad job of it. Much talking was being done in colonial legislatures and the British Lion belched belligerent ambiguities.

It was a year of troubles and worry. Stars and sages told of bad times near at hand; and 1774 was the birth year of Meriwether Lewis, of Albemarle county, Virginia—Meriwether Lewis, who was to become a captain in the United States Army, secretary to President Thomas Jefferson, leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific, Governor of the Louisiana Territory, and helmsman extraordinary of the American frontier.

History has dealt lightly with this frontier Virginian. Thomas Jefferson's brief *Life of Captain Meriwether Lewis*, written as an open letter to preface the first published version of the Lewis and Clark Expedition says:

## THE FRIEND OF JEFFERSON

Meriwether Lewis, late Governor of Louisiana, was born on the eighteenth of August, 1774, near the town of Charlottesville, in the County of Albemarle, in Virginia, of one of the distinguished families of that state. John Lewis, one of his father's uncles, was a member of the king's council before the revolution. Another of them, Fielding Lewis, married a sister of General Washington. His father, William Lewis, was the youngest of five sons of Col. Robert Lewis, of Albemarle. . . .

Nickolas Lewis, the second of his father's brothers, commanded a regiment of militia in the successful expedition of 1776, against the Cherokee Indians; who, seduced by the agents of the British government to take up the hatchet against us, had committed great havoc on our Southern frontier by murdering and scalping helpless women and children, according to their cruel and cowardly method of warfare.

This member of the family of Lewises, whose bravery was so usefully proved on this occasion, was endeared to all who knew him by his inflexible probity, courteous disposition, benevolent heart, and engaging modesty and manners. He was the umpire of all the private differences of his county—selected always by both parties. He was also the guardian of Meriwether Lewis, of whom we are now to speak, and who had lost his father at an early age. He continued some years under the fostering care of a tender mother, of the respectable family of Meriwethers, of the same county; and was remarkable even in infancy for enterprise, boldness and discretion.

When only eight years old he habitually went out, in the dead of night, alone with his dogs, into the forests to hunt the racoon and opossum, which, seeking their food at night, can then only be taken. In this exercise, no season or circumstance could obstruct his purpose—plunging through the winter snow and frozen streams

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

in pursuit of his object. At thirteen he was put in the latin school, and continued at that until eighteen, when he returned to his mother, and entered on the cares of his farm; having, as well as a younger brother, been left by his father with a competency for all the correct and comfortable purposes of a temporate life. . . .

His talent for observation, which had led him to an accurate knowledge of the plants and animals of his own county; would have distinguished him as a farmer; but at the age of twenty, yielding to the ardor of youth and a passion for more dazzling pursuits, he engaged as a volunteer in the body of militia which were called out by General Washington on the occasion of the discontent produced by the excise taxes in the Western parts of the United States; and from that situation he was removed to the regular service as a lieutenant in the line.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Jefferson's enthusiasm for Meriwether Lewis never waned. The two had a great deal in common. In the beginning, the Albemarle valley had been settled by Peter Jefferson (father of Thomas Jefferson), Isham Randolph, Robert Lewis and Nickolas Meriwether, the latter two were grandfathers of Meriwether Lewis.

Both Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis were born within sight of their paternal homesteads. Both Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis were widows' sons. Peter Jefferson died when Thomas was fourteen. William Lewis died when Meriwether was four. Both were born of pioneers. When Peter Jefferson was twenty-eight he rode a hundred miles through the wilderness,

<sup>1</sup> *An Expedition to the Pacific*, Biddle edition.

## THE FRIEND OF JEFFERSON

bought a thousand acres of land along the banks of a stream then known as River Anne, cleared a field, built a cabin and took home a bride. Five years later, on April 13, 1743, there was born to the union a third son named Thomas. By the year of Meriwether Lewis's birth, this Thomas Jefferson had become a famous man, as well as a wealthy one.

This was an entry of contrast. Meriwether Lewis was born into a family of sinking fortune. In Albemarle, holdings and families waxed and waned with the tobacco market. Tobacco had proved a hard master. First hardy pioneering was overtaken by the softenings of wealth. Then came tribulations and waning crops and debt and final bankruptcy. So wealth and land and names died. All of this Thomas Jefferson, red-haired, be-freckled, and fiddle-playing lawyer, had excellent reason to observe at close range.

It was in the course of a bankruptcy proceeding that Meriwether Lewis gained a first forceful impression of the man who was to become his president, employer and friend. When Thomas Jefferson called at the Lewis farmhouse, he showed interest in Meriwether, first heir of the union of the Meriwethers and Lewises; but the legal issue was drab. Four years before his death, Nickolas Meriwether had presented his daughter, Ann Lewis, a dowry of fourteen hundred acres in land, duly worn by years of tobacco culture, but, nevertheless, the beginning of a plantation to be built up with new lands and new men.

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Fate is not always kind to first families. Nickolas Meriwether's death had found his personal holding of sixteen thousand acres of tobacco land and all his slaves put under the auctioneer's gavel, and still his debts were not satisfied. Just five years after Ann Meriwether's marriage to William Lewis, her husband had met death from pneumonia.

Slow years of the Revolution wore on. Even in the peaceful valleys of Albemarle the war proved costly. Trade and law became musty and vague with disuse; but when the war was over issues of debts and bankruptcies rose to life like weeds in Maytime. Thomas Jefferson assumed defense of the Widow Lewis against the terrors of the auction block. The Meriwether fortunes were lost, but Ann Meriwether had received her plantation as dowry in clear title and good faith. Hers was an ancestral holding. This was the case that Jefferson represented and won.<sup>1</sup>

So it came about that Thomas Jefferson warded ruin from the Lewis plantation. The nine-year-old was duly mindful that this foremost young man of Albemarle was straight as a gun-barrel, sinewy and active, and skilled both with horse and gun; that he dressed plainly but well, that he was much interested in fields and forests. Thomas Jefferson in turn noticed that Meriwether Lewis was astonishingly big for his age, that his features were resolute, that he seemed well at ease even in the presence of such an illustrious personage as Thomas Jefferson.

<sup>1</sup> Anderson Letter Collection.

## THE FRIEND OF JEFFERSON

Meriwether's mother had complained that her first son was too much given to loneliness. She recognized that as a trait duly inherited. All the clan of Lewises were self-sufficient and recluse and given to seizures of melancholia. Meriwether's father had suffered much from moodiness, which could be neither explained nor remedied. Meriwether's father, too, had held the true frontiersman's adoration of the open woods and hills, and had absorbed from them a ponderous giving of silence.

Meriwether did have one friend of close standing,<sup>1</sup> that a neighbor youth whose christened name was Billy Clark. Billy was the ninth son of the Clarks who also were farmers of Albemarle, tenants of a rented plantation. The two eldest sons, Jonathan and George Rogers, already had made names for themselves in the War for Independence. Billy had absorbed considerable of their glory and craved more glory of his own.

William Clark and Meriwether Lewis were friends from babyhood. Billy was four years the older, but the fact that Merne was big for his age went to balance the difference. The two played together, hunted together and roamed the forested hills of Albemarle. They played soldier and talked much of wars, which was altogether fitting. Their dreaming of war and conquests was colored with near reality.

Not that the Revolution actually brought fighting

<sup>1</sup> See Jefferson, *Introduction* Biddle Edition.



## MERIWETHER LEWIS

into Albemarle, but the manpower even of this frontier was well taken by the war and combat had come perilously close. In 1781, when Merne Lewis was seven and Billy Clark eleven, a British force, led by the devil himself in the form of Benedict Arnold, swept down upon the unguarded Virginia boundaries. Strategically speaking, this move was largely accidental. Green was offering desperate challenge to Britain's advantages in the Carolinas. Howe and Burgoyne in the northern arena had done some effective queering of British futures. Arnold's band was little more than a refugee raiding party. Frontier Virginia, at the moment almost manless, rallied to a gallant but needless rustic defense. Merne Lewis and Billy Clark honed to be numbered among the defenders. Both could load and fire a rifle and both waited the chance to do damage to the common enemy; but the chance failed to materialize.

When the war was ended and the fighting men came home, Merne and Billy listened to wondrous and romantic tales of rough-and-ready combat, of the grimness and gayety of soldiering, and made sure vows to become military men.

Years passed on, years that were poor but generally enjoyable. Then notice came that the tribe of Clarks were moving out of Albemarle, away to the bluegrass wonderland of Kentucky, to a place called Mulberry Hill, on Beargrass Creek, not far from Louisville. Merne Lewis was ten at the time.

## THE FRIEND OF JEFFERSON

Billy Clark was fourteen. Trails were parted and that was that.

Meriwether Lewis was again put by himself, and he stayed child of forests and of unfenced destinies. For the most part he hunted alone and tramped alone, serious and stalwart, and possessed of wondering silence, staying free of the realm of tears or loud laughter. His eyes and forehead held stillness and the ecstasies of daydreaming.

Boyhood built its own story, a hazy chronicle of hills and woods, of farming, hunting and wandering. The Widow Lewis's holding of land waxed poorer and poorer with the passing of years. Harvests grew lighter and the labor heavier.

Following the educational ways of middle-scope farmers, Meriwether had taken his start of reading and writing and arithmetic at home, under the tutelage of his mother; and now that he was nearing his thirteenth birthday, the common estimate was that his schooling should be given a more serious notice. His Uncle Nickolas Lewis recommended a Latin school. Such a course would wield cultural value, and what was more it would bring this son of loneliness in company with fellow men. As guardian, Uncle Nickolas advanced the needed funds and the youth set out for Professor Tally's Latin Academy at Williamsburg.

Correspondence brought good word of young Billy Clark, newly become a Kentuckian. "Your brother William is gone out as a cadet with General Clark on the Expedition. He is a youth of

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

solid and promising parts and as brave as Cæsar.” So wrote Robert Hinds to Colonel Jonathan, oldest of the Clark tribe.

The stage was taking its props. While Merne Lewis was away at Williamsburg, fighting genitives and ablatives, Billy Clark had gone forth to fight the Indians in far-off Ohio, and Thomas Jefferson had become United States Minister to France.

## CHAPTER III

“YOU’RE IN THE ARMY NOW”

SO FAR as Meriwether Lewis was concerned, schooling was early done with. He had spent six months a year for five years at Professor Tally’s Latin Academy, where he had proven a fair scholar, orderly and well-mannered; brilliant in arithmetic and geometry, competent in grammar and Latin, obviously weak in spelling. He had dabbled in the rudiments of algebra and had labored through Cæsar’s *Wars* and into the agricultural vagaries of Vergil.

The first day of July, 1792, six weeks before his eighteenth birthday, found him graduated from Tally’s Academy into the adjoining world of fields and hills and forest lands. For his five years of schooling was reckoned as a liberal education in Albemarle. Now home duty called to him, the rather dire need of making a living. Always well grown for his age, eighteen found the boy six feet one high, shaggy haired, dark complexioned, and steady of eye and trigger-finger.

Reuben, Meriwether’s younger brother, who was fifteen, represented the only other manpower available for the conduct of the Lewis’ farm. Reuben had forfeited his own schooling insistentlly, protest-

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

ing vehemently at any encroachment of the cultural life. He was a frontiersman, by God, and he reckoned to stay that way. The Widow Lewis accepted this independent spirit of her sons as a rightful legacy. They were born of a liberty-loving clan.

Schooling over, Meriwether Lewis packed two carpet bags and boarded Wingham's stage, traveling a rough and circling road, through realms of tobacco lands and planter's homes, through unmolested forests and along gay, youthful rivers. Home awaited welcoming, the sturdy red brick house considerably lost in a grove of scrubby pine. On greeting his mother, Meriwether Lewis marveled at her enduring youth. Even at forty the daughter of the Meriwethers was well bodied and smiling, her black hair untouched with gray, her blue eyes bright and untroubled. The Widow Lewis marveled at the maturity of her son. Not yet eighteen, boyhood was definitely gone from him. He was full-grown and firmly built, free of the gangliness of adolescence, clear-featured and weather bronzed. He walked and talked like a mature man. For that matter, this Merne had always been a man.

The returning scholar fell into the rush of farm work; he yoked oxen, rigged plows and joined Reuben in the labors of farming; but Merne was not too much absorbed in agriculture to notice another

## “YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW”

change in home affairs—the repeated and insistent visits of John Marks, a neighbor planter, a sturdy, slow-moving peasant, who, the preceding winter, had lost his wife during an invasion of smallpox. Already the plightings of Widower Marks and Widow Lewis had become repeated clothesline talk of the neighborhood. The eldest son of the Lewises treated the mature suitor coolly, but took kindly to young John Marks, the widower's eight-year-old son.

“The child has a most promising mind,” observed the sage eighteen-year-old. “His education must not be neglected.”

John Marks made wistful predictions that young Meriwether Lewis would soon be in his era of wild oats, apprehensions that were not convincingly grounded; for, added to his abnormal maturity, Meriwether Lewis was suffering the beginning labors of high seriousness. Life to him was a tremendously serious matter. So, too, was love.

Although there were girls about in plenty, some of good blood and behavior, young Lewis indulged in only the most trivial quotient of courting. There were intimations of one rather faint love affair with Maria Wood, also of Albemarle, fifteen years old and attractive enough to look upon, but unluckily a first cousin. Intermarriage of blood kin was contrary to Albemarle tradition. In the Tidewater it would likely have gone unquestioned, but Albemarle belonged to the frontier and a frontier must beget strong sons.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

Meriwether wasn't, of course, the man to take an abstraction in genetics too seriously. His mother had dwelt upon the degeneracy of marriage between cousins. Merne was enough of a skeptic to have challenged this, had there been any real grounds for doing so; but there weren't. Maria Wood was too much a child. She was charming and beset with alluring graces. Her mother, sister to Merne's father, had married a stagecoach driver named Bill Wood. One daughter had been born to the union. Several years rolled around and one day the coach driver vanished. So for that matter did the coach and the horses and the wife's bit of legacy.

Maria suggested that they might meet again when both were a few years older, but Meriwether said poetically that when wild violets bloom in April—they are lovely in April; but when summer comes, earth gives succor to other blossoms.

Early autumn brought pert news from the north. War was brewing. Mountaineers in western Pennsylvania had challenged the authority of the United States Government—cast aspersions upon Federal arms and the authority of President Washington. Something was going to be done about it. The President had issued a call for the militia—the guardsmen of Pennsylvania, Virginia and New Jersey. Gen. Dan Morgan rode the streets of Williamsburg in his blue and red parade uniform, mounted on a strapping black stallion. Dan Morgan was to lead the Virginians. Word of the re-

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cruit had spread far—to Inlis Ferry and Laurel Fork and Moccasin Gap, even to Powell Mountain, beyond which lay the great gap which led into a land of unknown frontiers and ferocious Red Men.

The Lewis boys laid by farm work and strode to town to hear more of the great news. Leading citizens were making addresses and urging fervently. The great Thomas Jefferson came forward with the quiet contention that any section's allegiance to the Union could be built only through tolerance and good will; not by wrath and firearms; but President Washington had called for the Militias and fighting was obviously the choice of George Washington.

Both the Lewis boys were in a mood to join the looming war. Other youths from Albemarle countryside already were enlisting. Young David Walker, for example, and William Randolph and Jonathan Hans, all privates, but, nevertheless, they sported silver buttons and blue uniforms and deer-skin leggings and shoulder ornaments bearing the golden seal of the commonwealth of Virginia.

Meriwether and Reuben Lewis waited in a tangle of farm work. John Marks be damned. Their mother was still a widow, dependent upon her sons. Therefore both could not join the war.

They took the matter to their guardian uncle. Uncle Nickolas spoke straight from the shoulder. He said that the Lewis family had never hesitated to serve state and country in war; that Meriwether was of legal fighting age and had a yearning for the



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Army; that Reuben was barely sixteen and admittedly preferred other sorts of adventure. The sensible way would be for the eldest son to go forth and fight for Virginia, while the younger attended the land.

Summer was over and early autumn begun when Thomas Jefferson returned to Albemarle. Here was the how of the war, which folks were calling the Whiskey Rebellion. The trouble had risen in the four western counties of Pennsylvania's mountainous frontier.

Since the Revolution, whiskey making had been the chief trade of the section; the one possible way of transporting and marketing the grain crop; the one logical source of cash money. Five-sixths of these mountain farmers, it was reported, had been operating distilleries without registration.

Now Tom the Tinker was speaking. Tom the Tinker, whose real name was John Holcroft, was for open revolt. He advocated wrecking all distilleries that were legally registered with the government. After a rally at Mingo Creek, Tinker and his band had marched to the home of Gen. John Neville, chief revenue inspector, and demanded that the General surrender all warrants against excise evaders. Neville answered with a round of gunfire. A mountaineer was killed.

Neville then called on Major Kirkpatrick, of the army, and ten United States soldiers, to protect his property from further attacks. The Tinker band,

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headed by Sam MacFarland, a hero of the Revolution, returned to demand again that all warrants be surrendered. The soldiers again answered with a volley of musketry. MacFarland was ripped to pieces. This time the mountaineers returned the fusillade and set fire to the house. Kirkpatrick and his ten soldiers surrendered.

Now the rebels were tiring of rebellion. On the twentieth of August their elected leaders, the “Committee of Twelve,” voted to lay aside arms and to accede to the will of the United States. President George Washington stayed resolute. He would send an army over the mountains.

The Albemarle company of militia now awaited marching orders. The farming season was at a close. Meriwether Lewis had put in a good summer of work. Having talked the matter over with Mr. Jefferson, the eighteen-year-old signed in as a private in Company A, Third Sub-legion of Virginia Guards.

Early in October, Company A marched forth in defense of President and country. Meriwether Lewis rose early and packed his carpet bag and, still wearing a suit of brown home-spun, bade farewell to his home land, to his mother and Reuben. This October morning was an eventful one for the tall, serious youth from Albemarle—the start of a great career of soldiering, a way that would lead over thousands of rough and adventurous miles, to honors and victories and defeats.

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Service in the Virginia Militia was hazy and informal. Officers from the grade of captain up were veterans of the Revolution and sons of first families. The junior officers, lieutenants, and ensigns represented a post-war generation of frontier aristocracy.

Drilling was negligible. Steuben's *Manual of Infantry* was known to some of the officers, but seasoning came from marching. When the companies were organized and their shoes duly limbered, they struck out overland for the rendezvous at Trenton, tramping twelve to twenty miles a day, climbing mountains, fording rivers, trudging single file through forest lands, howsoever the trail led.

Officers kept the blue and white and scarlet of the Revolution, whereas soldiers furnished their own uniforms, which varied from plain homespun, with knee-length breeches, to suits of buckskin worn Indian style, with ornate coonskin caps. Firearms were as variable. Some carried dueling pistols, others long-barreled hunting rifles, others no weapons at all. So the procession fell under way, packs and rifles swaying to the rugged, long-strided pace of frontiersmen, powder horns and flint boxes offering jingling accompaniment; officers leading, mounted on splendid chargers. All in all, it was a pleasant introduction to soldiering. The weather was pleasant, and the ragged columns of marching frontiersmen took quarters and food and forage free for the asking (or taking) at farmhouses and villages along the road.

Meriwether Lewis relished the swagger and

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gusto of bearing arms. He was a soldier, by God, a soldier setting out to fight. He was facing a new horizon. He could forget—forget everything—Maria Wood, he could forget her. He could also forget John Marks, the cherry-faced lout who hoped to mix with good blood. He could forget the tobacco worms and pig stys; the sassafras sprouts, and droughts, and failing soil.

At Trenton the Virginia soldiery was joined by the great commander, George Washington, who rode forth upon his proverbial white charger, stalwart and handsomely uniformed. The militia cheered and the general waved his hat in salute.

Washington had brought with him Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, who was officially interested in the whiskey excise. Mr. Hamilton, feeling the weight of decrepit health, kept within his four-horse coach. At Carlisle the Southerners were joined by the militias of New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. Light Horse Harry Lee, Governor of Virginia, took charge of the combined force. Washington and Hamilton, their staff officers and scouts, passed ahead.

Leaving Carlisle, Washington was met by two West Pennsylvania committeemen, who came to reassure the President that submission and order could and would be restored without the use of military force. Washington was waspish. He said that the chief expense of the army had already been incurred; the campaign had been ordered, and that it would be carried through. The peace delegates

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offered further protests. They said that the Pennsylvania and New Jersey militias were nothing but hordes of vandals and drunkards. The mountain people of Pennsylvania were in particular dread of the troops from New Jersey, since these fellows, always a hard lot, now were sorely wrath. Pamphlets by Tom the Tinker had named them the Watermelon Army, and had made bold to suggest that they stay home and thresh buckwheat and make war on crabs and oysters.

Washington was unmoved. He, too, had heard that the Jerseymen sometimes misbehaved. Therefore he would mix their forces with those of Virginia gentlemen. The delegates gathered two new members, and once more begged presidential leniency; but Washington had left for Philadelphia. The delegates hurried to Uniontown to plead with Light Horse Harry Lee, Governor of Virginia, and official commander of the expedition. Lee received them with charming grace, several bows and a generous dram of whiskey, but he had no choice other than to repeat the President's orders. His was a conquering army out to conquer.

The punishing arms pushed on from Bedford into Westmoreland county. The cavalry units hurried on to Parkinson's Ferry while the infantry pitched camp in the valley of the Youghiogheny River, a position generally convenient to any portion of the western country.

Meanwhile, Tom the Tinker and all the band of followers who had actually taken arms against the

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Federal marshals had ample time to hide in the far mountains, leaving only the peace-abiding citizenry to answer the wrath of the soldiery.

Rumor told that the infantry wrought havoc with barnyards and rural home life. The boys were out for a good time, and the good farm folk were in for a bad one. Pigs and cattle and poultry vanished. Wine cellars and liquor stores were appropriated and drunken militiamen lay sprawled here and there over the countryside. Even the officers made frolic of the general's orders against pillaging.

On the night of November thirteenth, the dismal business came to a dismal climax. Cavalry companies scattered throughout the four counties sallied forth and drove from their beds some two hundred peace-abiding citizens to answer arrest for conspiracy and treason.

In Mingo Creek settlement, where the turmoil had begun, New Jersey horsemen routed out some forty citizens, marched them overland to Parkinson Ferry, barefoot and naked through cold miles of mud, and binding them in twos, back to back, left them to stand twenty-four hours without food or shelter. On the following day the entire number of prisoners were marched overland to Pittsburgh, there to stand questioning before the district judge.

Alexander Hamilton served as chief questioner at the trial and proved that a great financier may be a miserable prosecutor. The few prisoners who had taken part in the rebellion were dismissed, while nearly a hundred of the best people of the

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county were peremptorily indicted and sent to Philadelphia to await formal trial for treason; but George Washington promptly reprieved all sentences.

So ended the Whiskey Rebellion. The militias were marched directly to their homes and dismissed. Peace came once more to the West Pennsylvania countryside, and the moonshiners, in keeping with the age-old tradition of their trade, kept right on moonshining.

Meriwether Lewis had taken a first try at soldiering. During three months he had tramped, eaten, drunk and cavorted as a civilian militiaman; he had taken orders to be obeyed or disregarded very much as he saw fit. After a month of marching he had spent an aimless month of idleness in an aimless camp along an aimless river, an aimless participant in an aimless expedition. Although a rifleman, he had not once fired his rifle; but he had tasted military life and he liked the taste.

Back at Charlottesville, in mid-January, Private of Militia Meriwether Lewis sought enlistment in the regular army. Wise men of the town, even the great Dan Morgan himself, spoke highly of the promises of a career of soldiering. The army would have to be expanded. There was now a thousand miles of frontier in need of protection from the Indians. There were far-strewn river ports and outposts to be guarded. The line of western frontiers was expanding, and it took no prophet to tell

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that, without better Indian control, American frontiers could never flourish.

Soldiering was, besides, truly a gentleman's vocation; so Meriwether Lewis, all at a thrust of youthful eagerness, enlisted in the Regular Army, and so satisfactory had been his record with the militia that this time the name of the nineteen-year-old was entered on the roster of ensigns and Meriwether Lewis made ready to return to Albemarle there to tell the good news; but the planning was unnecessary. Instead, he was ordered to Philadelphia to serve on an ordnance detail, attending to rifles and ammunition that were to equip a new expedition faced with real warfare.



## CHAPTER IV

### ODYSSEY OF MAD ANTHONY

**P**ATRIOTICALLY speaking, it was time for another fight. American property was being destroyed. American scalps were being lifted from American heads. President George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox agreed that decency demanded something be done about it. Congress, after an indefinite session of wrangling, took the same view. Unruly Indians of the Ohio Territory were now to be subjugated by the might of American arms.

The oratorical roses had practical thorns. Five American generals already had led five armies against the Federated Tribes, and five expeditions had failed. Generals George Rogers Clark, Josiah Harmar, Charles Scott, James Wilkinson, and Arthur St. Clair had in that order led military expeditions into the frontier of Ohio and taken their official turns at chastisement and defeat at the co-operative hands of the Shawnees, Senecas, Delawares, Wyandottes, and Miamis.

The situation had acquired bitter tradition. Back in 1781, for example, a mob of about a hundred frontiersmen from the countryside of Pittsburgh had come upon ninety-four Delawares and two

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Wyandottes harvesting their crop of corn, and having surrounded the Indians, herded them into a village and murdered them every one, men, women and children.

So hatred burned in the hearts of the Red Men who lived beyond the Ohio, hatred and vengeance. To make it worse, Britain, through the Indian agents and the many arms of the Hudson Bay Company, like the Indians themselves, wished the Ohio country to be left a land of unbothered wilderness, so that British fur traders could wage their luxurious traffic in pelts undisturbed, and gain vastly from commerce with the credulous Red Men.

Anthony Wayne, natural-born soldier and soldier-builder, had been recalled from his failing tobacco plantation down in Georgia to become Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States. The old master of recruits, fast failing in health, admitted readily that he would have cherished the appointment more, had there been any army to command. In 1794 our regular army had about nine hundred men.<sup>1</sup> Added to these was a haphazard force of about fifteen hundred volunteers, frontiersmen from western Virginia and Kentucky, huskies with environmental tendency to do what they pleased, say what they pleased, to spit or shoot when they saw fit.

The Secretary of War still believed that the Ohio situation might be helped more by treaty than by bayonet and in a last effort to gain a boundary agreement he dispatched Maj. Alexander Trueman and

<sup>1</sup> War Files, *Status of Enlistment*, 1794, Library of Congress.

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Col. John Harden of the Fourth Sub-legion to talk peace with the Federated Tribes, who promptly scalped the two officers.

Thereupon Mad Anthony Wayne went into action, reckoning to mobilize his army at Pittsburgh. Brig. Gen. James Wilkinson, childishy pompous and militantly stupid, was second in command. Thomas Posey, the third brigadier, was a fierce-tempered, heavy-drinking old war horse who flourished on trouble.

Orderly books of the beginning period of training tell of great hubbub. We find, for example, that Capt. Ballard Smith, of Virginia, took Sergeant Thrit's wife into his tent, and later indulged in drunken fistics with Sergeant Thrit; that Ensign Jasoway refused to carry weapons while mounting guard; that Lieut. Nathaniel Huston, of the Rifle Corps, was openly disobedient to orders; that Capt. John Platt was discharged for scandalous behavior; that Capt. Benjamin Price challenged Lieut. Piercy Pope to an affair of honor, and got shot through the mid-section; that Lieut. Daniel Saint Thomas Junifer killed Ensign Truman Jasoway in a duel.

Mad Anthony Wayne led just such a mob to winter quarters at a settlement called Legionville, twenty-seven miles down the Ohio from Pittsburgh. He drilled them and swore at them and put them through skirmishes. Part of the troops complained and deserted and sped over the hills for easier lives; but the old warrior was finally determined that he

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would go against the Ohio Indians with a seasoned fighting force, not a dissolute mob of recruits.

As a pacific afterthought, Anthony Wayne made a try for peaceful arbitration. He invited the four great chiefs, Corn Plant, New Arrow, Big Tree, and Gausutha to his headquarters for peace talk. Chief Corn Plant, the spokesman, delivered this ultimatum:

"My heart and my mind are fixed on that river '(the Ohio). May that water continue to run and remain the boundary between the White and the Red people on its opposite shores."

That was that. Anthony Wayne went back to drilling. When springtime came he put his force to building flatboats, and early in May loaded on his warrior host of three thousand and floated down the Ohio to Fort Washington, near the site of Cincinnati. There he proposed to head his expedition into the land of remorseless scalplings.

At this point we may lend notice to a young lieutenant in Wayne's rifle corps, a twenty-four-year-old Kentuckian named William Clark, who was amassing some first-hand knowledge in conducting expeditions, which was entirely fitting and proper. For this younger brother of George Rogers Clark, and bosom friend of Meriwether Lewis, was later to join in leadership of one of the most audacious expeditions in New World history.

William Clark kept a daily journal of the campaign—a cryptic diary flavored with realistic thinking and romantic spelling. On the twenty-eighth

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of July, 1795, Mad Anthony Wayne led his force forth from Fort Washington northward toward Fort Recovery. Billy Clark, with Doric simplicity, recorded the campaign's opening:

We proceed with Usual Velocity Though Thickets almost impervious, thro Morasses, Defiles, bends and nettles more than waist high by miles in length & on the left flank crossed the water course on which Recovery stands more than one dozen times—but not without great labor both to men and horses in plunging through the muddy bed of said creek: notwithstanding all these difficulties we arrived hear early in the Evening and found the Creek impassable for Wagons, therefore encamped after a march of about 12 miles.

So the way continued. A company of about two hundred scouts or "pioneers" went ahead of the main body to clear a trail. Through blistering summer heat and endless mud flats the column pressed on into the wilderness. Arrived at the site of Fort Recovery, Mad Anthony Wayne commanded that the post be fortified with strong logs. When this was done he ordered his force forward into the wilderness. As sweating, bruising days followed, the Corps began to show clear proof of discipline.

Summer wore on, blisteringly hot. On the seventh day of August, scouts scampered into camp to tell that the Indians were coming to attack. The camp was asleep. Mad Anthony Wayne kept on sleeping. Lieut. William Clark noted:

Had the alarm been well founded & the enemy on our Heels the Old Gentleman would have been caught sleep-

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ing for he had already gone to bed to give ease to his infirmities & was so fast in the arms of Morpheus to give some trouble to wake him.

Next morning the troops moved on past the confluence of the Mauries Creek, into the land of the Delawares, past cultivated fields which Indians had planted and tilled, past villages of wigwams newly abandoned. Arrived at Mauries River, Anthony Wayne halted his force and put them to building another garrison. Mosquitoes came forth in torturesome swarms; the commander swore and sweated and so did the troops. Lieut. William Clark was disgruntled:

I am now lead to a reflection which if indulged, would perhaps give me two great a disgust to a military life, and embitter my present situation. Were subalterns of this army, in general, to forego oppertunities of rendering their Country a service & absolutely so far neglect their duty as do some officers of higher rank, what merit would they find—none.

Next day the young Kentuckian met with a happier turn of fortune. It came through the arrival of a tall, well-limbed young ensign named Meriwether Lewis.

Three ensigns came together, Eldridge, Walker and Lewis, all from Virginia, all from Albemarle county. All three had served under Dan Morgan of Virginia in the Whiskey Rebellion; all three had enlisted as privates of militia and come out as ensigns subject to assignment in the Regular Army. From Charlottesville they had come by horseback

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to Pittsburgh. There they loaded themselves and their horses on a flatboat and after three weeks of drifting and drinking arrived at Fort Washington, where they remounted and proceeded overland to join the pioneering army, trailing the force more than a hundred miles through an Indian-haunted wilderness. Now by the grace of the gods that care for all venturesome young Indian fighters they had arrived, bedecked in new uniforms with gold-braid trimmings, wearing shiny sabres, and bearing duty orders direct from the Secretary of War. Now the three had surrendered their horses to the high command and joined in with the Infantry.

Thus Lewis and Clark met in the wilderness of Ohio; two who had played together in the woods and hills of Albemarle. Lieutenant Clark, who was twenty-four and clean shaven, marveled at the fuzzy mustachio worn by the ensign not yet twenty-one. The two clasped hands and were glad—glad to be together, glad to be soldiering in a campaign that promised real adventure and glory.

They talked late that night, under a wilderness sky which told of an infinity of peace. The ensign was wondrous proud to be with the lieutenant. More than ten years had past since they had last wandered together in the hills of Albemarle, years of adventure and crowding maturity. Clark jotted this in his journal:

Lewis came tonight—am much pleased.

There was plenty to talk about. Merne knew the



*Brown Brothers*

WILLIAM CLARK  
(From a painting by Peale)





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late news from Albemarle. Billy had less recent word of Kentucky frontiers; of friendly neighbors who had parted; of the wonders of the Great Meadows and of his famous elder brother, George Rogers Clark, general and hero of the Revolution, who next to Thomas Jefferson had been the most talked of young man in all Albemarle. Like the Sage of Monticello, George Rogers Clark was temporarily out of the public eye.

Billy Clark found himself beset with most of the talking. The young man from Virginia was excessively silent. He wanted to hear about the expedition, about Mad Anthony Wayne, about the Kentucky wonderland, about the Ohio Indians and Clark's estimate of the probabilities of a fight. The Kentuckian told enthusiastically of Kentucky and confided that he thought the chances of being scalped for the glory of the Stars and Stripes excellent; that he regarded Anthony Wayne as a gouty old dunderhead who belonged as headmaster of a female seminary.

The Virginian smiled and gazed into the wilderness night.

"Don't the cat ever let go your tongue?"

"Now and then; but its more fun being still. That way a man can think."

"If you want to think, what the devil did you join the army for?"

"Because of its air and mud and rifle smoke. Because while a man's young—he's got a right to take of the open."

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The two stood long, listening to the melody of summer night. Then when the night had grown tired they shed their coats, and using them as covers, slept on the forest earth.

Next day the pioneering army pushed on and crossed the La Graze River, leaving the patrol unit on the far side. That was unfortunate, for the Indians attacked, taking the rifle patrol off guard, six miles from the main body of the force. The unguarded wing returned the fire and retreated as best they could. Clark and Lewis, with the main echelon, heard of the defeat with manly disgust. The attacking force was estimated at nine hundred Indians and about one hundred Canadians.

This last surmise brought boiling temperature to Anthony Wayne. He had set forth to fight Indians and he was fighting Englishmen. Not that he had any ethical dislike for doing so, he would have preferred to fight the English in the first place; but England and the United States were nominally at peace, and England was bringing armed forces into territory that she had solemnly forfeited.

Mad Anthony had heard, a month before, that Little Turtle, chief of the Miami nation, was journeying to Canada to ask long-promised British support in defeating this latest and most resolute American army. Early in the year, Lord Dorchester, commanding England's arms in Canada, had issued this official statement:

From the manner in which the people of the United States push on and from what I learn of their conduct

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toward the sea; I shall not be surprised if we are at war with them during the course of the present year. . . .

I shall acknowledge no land to be theirs which has been encroached on by them since the year 1783. All approaches toward us since that time and all the purchases made by them I consider as an infringement upon the king's rights.

Most of this was mere talk, but it was not all talk. In April of that year, 1794, John Semecoe, Lieutenant Governor of Canada, arrived at the foot of the Maumee Rapids, bringing with him men, tools and artillery, and set out building a fort of heavy logs. When the building was done, three companies of British Regulars under Maj. William Campbell, and an accompanying detail of Canadian militia marched inside the fort and so waited there, presumably to offer a final barrier to the American march through the wilderness.

Mad Anthony Wayne then made the ultimatum. If the British tried to impede his course they would be shot down, war or no war. His officers and men joined in fervent assent.

Meanwhile Ensign Meriwether Lewis, now attached to Wayne's Third Sub-legion as a platoon leader, was having opportunities to learn real military ways and the competent manipulation of troops. The Whiskey Rebellion had been a glorified outing—a medley of drinking and fistics and minor pillages; but here was real war. Here he was marching on Fort Recovery where, a few months before, Arthur St. Clair's force of six hun-

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dred all had taken death by tomahawks. Anthony Wayne, hero of Stony Point, was directing a real occupation—clearing roads, building bridges, keeping provisions protected, guarding his force against surprise attack.

Meriwether Lewis was having an instructive taste of organized warfare. He had heard battle. He had seen wounded and dead soldiers. He was leading troops and he was in the same company with Bill Clark.

The long columns of subduers tramped on through Indian farm lands, through rank green corn, through midget fields of pumpkin and squashes and garden patches of cucumbers and potatoes, past newly abandoned villages of cabins and tepees. It was no midsummer picnic for anyone concerned, and for the Indians it was the beginning of final ruin.

Arrived at the meeting place of the Miami and Auglaize rivers, Mad Anthony Wayne once more halted the force and chose a model fort site, protected by water on its front and two sides. Here his army traded rifles for axes and in eight days finished another squatty log fort, and having finished it, the old war horse declaimed:

“Now I defy Indians, English and the devils in Hell to take it,” and so the building was named Fort Defiance.

While the fort was being built, Meriwether Lewis went forth for reconnaissance. In company with three privates he roamed much through the

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sultry wilderness to little avail, for no Indians were to be seen; nothing but rolling hills and crowded forests that held wonderlands of wild ferns and moss, high lanes of goldenrod, and lost valleys crowded with rank green grass.

Meriwether Lewis was delighted at the chance to be away from sweating and swearing troops, and alone in the woods; but the ensign from Virginia had no real expectation of finding Indians. The tribes were wary, their manpower well organized and competently directed. The Red Men were playing a strictly defensive game. Wayne's watch was so heavy now that stray attackers could gain nothing but a taste of death.

Meriwether Lewis spent a week at forest wandering. His military reports noted that there were nineteen varieties of wild ferns and seven mosses that he had never encountered in Albemarle; further that he had found shade so dense that noon-day appeared like twilight, and that he hoped to see some Indians and to deal with them upon friendly terms.

Anthony Wayne pressed on toward the British fort, putting his forces in combat formation, and marching from daylight until dark. Soldiers and officers trudged along under full packs, bayonets set to rifles, linen shirts open, coats and formalities forgotten under the blistering August sun. Lewis and Clark tramped side by side, Clark sweating and beseeching the great god Mars to let something happen, Lewis simply sweating.

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This time Mars was disposed to give the boys a break. When they were in striking distance of the British stronghold at the Maumee, word came that about two thousand warriors of the Federated Tribes had gathered in a woodland beyond the fort to make battle, guaranteed protection from the British garrison.

The first part of the saying was true. When the American column swung into sight of Maumee the Indians took shelter in a forest which had lately been tumbled to earth by a tornado, and opened fire with good British rifles, taking advantage of the fallen trees.

Lieutenant Clark and Ensign Lewis were in the thick of the fight. Musket balls whirled close to their heads and clipped leaves and bark from trees. Anthony Wayne had put his rifle battalion forward but when the battle opened, hurled both lines of his legions on a pellmell charge into the fallen timber, shouting the final order:

"If I am a casualty, remember the standing order of the day is 'charge the damned rascals with the bayonet.'"

The grand finale for all the eighteen months of drilling and marching was anything but magnificent. The mob of warriors dislodged from their stronghold, went sprinting to the English fort where they found all doors locked. The British were double-crossing. The mis-promised Indians had no course save to tear out again for the tall timber, their rears exposed to American musket balls.

In due time a Red Coat strolled forth to the

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American headquarters bearing a white flag and the respects of Major William Campbell, of the Twenty-fourth British Regiment, commanding. But Mad Anthony Wayne had no respects to return. He said that if Major Campbell were entitled to any answer at all it would be a reminder that the position of the American Army was well in the jurisdiction of the United States.

The Sons of the Eagle looked upon the fort as a menace and they were keyed up to fight. The infantry spent the afternoon making impertinent remarks in the very maws of the British guns. Hearing that an English trading post was operated nearby, Wayne promptly dispatched a band of Kentuckians to set it afire, while young gallants of the Corps, Lewis and Clark among them, continued to stroll about the British garrison, hoping for trouble.

Wayne's army spent another day at burning the Indian's crops, giving military funerals to its dead, and attending to the wounded. Then the Corps pressed onward to the confluence of St. Mary's and St. Joseph's rivers, where stood the last capital of the Miamis. There at the village of Ke-keon-gay he built Fort Wayne, and began to consider locations of another winter's quarters.

Mad Anthony Wayne had won his last campaign. He had fought a major battle, routed the Federated Tribes, insulted the British colors and established a wedge of forts which split the Indian country midway between the Mississippi River and the Allegheny Mountains—Fort Wayne on the grounds of the ancient Miami capital, Fort Defiance in the



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very heart of the Federated Tribes, Fort Recovery on the scene of St. Clair's defeat, and Fort Greenville within supporting distance of them all.

Word came from Washington that John Jay, minister to England, had acquired the King's promise that British forces would be removed from the Ohio; that terms of the Treaty of Paris would be enforced. Further, that the United States would relegate the upper third of the Ohio country as home for the Federated Tribes and that each year thereafter would pay to the Wyandottes, Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Ottawas, Chippewas and Tototaws one thousand dollars in goods to each nation, and to the lesser tribes, the Weas, Kickapoos, El Rue, the Piankashaws and Kaskaskias half that amount.

Thus it ended. The Indians had begun their bitter cycle of defeat. The English lion had retired still grumbling. The debt-burdened American government had assumed new obligations and a new line of garrisons. Anthony Wayne had organized, led and fitted the first competent fighting corps of Americans since the Revolution. Subalterns and troops had learned discipline. Ensign Meriwether Lewis had served his first competent command and taken his first taste of actual warfare. He had learned considerable of the Indian habits, moods and fighting, and he had come through the campaign with the whole-hearted conviction that all Indian fighting was a stupid, infamous business.

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In a sense he liked the army well enough; its easy-going friendships and travel and workaday adventures; but the rôle of killer and oppressor burdened him. He hoped devoutly that there would be no more war with Indians. Fighting the British would be a different matter and a more agreeable one.

Merne Lewis found himself sad at leaving his command and particularly at leaving William Clark, who had brought boyhood back to him, who was principal of his one great and intimate friendship. Clark's amity and presence had always brought him delight, a sure spiritual asset which the young Virginian had come to recognize as both rare and precious. It wasn't that he disliked all other people, nor was he repellent to them. A good-looking young Army officer, unmarried and unattached, of good family, possessor of a fair amount of learning and a temperament for kindly philosophies is not likely, in the natural course of things, to be isolated from his fellow men; but Merne Lewis had none of the bumptiousness and verve of early manhood. He felt that he had been a man for a great many years. He sensed the wonderment, but also the frustration, of the ways of men, and they seemed far less important to him than other things—such as forests and mountains and open roads. Clark was important and Clark was leaving the Army. Clark had had his fill of soldiering under Wayne, and was going back to Beargrass Hill, near Louisville, there to turn planter.

## CHAPTER V

### CONQUESTS AND SPANISH FORTS

**A**NOTHER campaign was finished and Meriwether Lewis was returning to Charlottesville—with a promotion to the rank of lieutenant. Under Anthony Wayne he had taken a real lesson in soldiering. Mad Anthony had included the Virginian's name in the list of "Satisfactories." So Meriwether Lewis headed homeward with sure knowledge that his military career was favorably launched.

The ointment held one fly. William Clark's name was not on Mad Anthony's favored list, and the Kentuckian vowed that he was sick of soldiering; that he would be damned if he would tramp through another thousand miles of jungle and swamps for thirty-seven dollars a month and the right to wear brass buttons and drink his liquor among gentlemen-by-act-of-Congress; that he was going back to the Clark plantation on Beargrass Creek, near Louisville, there to be a country gentleman. Billy Clark swore and Merne Lewis's persuasions were of no avail.

The boyhood friends were again faced with parting. Wayne's army was mustered out of Fort Wash-

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ington. Lewis and Clark spent a week about the saloons and taverns of the river town that was to become Cincinnati. Furloughed troopers were having a wonderful time, but the youths who had come up together in Albemarle weren't. They were heartily pleased when the time arrived to board the *Moniat*, a flat boat operated by sweep and with supplementing oars, and devoted to mixed cargoes, of which Merne Lewis and Billy Clark expected to become a part.

The two young army men bolstered their spirits with brandy, and prepared to make the best of a bad prospect, but when sailing date came, the *Moniat* failed to sail. The captain and crew were drunk and the craft required resining. Four days later the captain and crew were still drunk and the craft still required resining.

Thereupon Lewis and Clark bought horses and set forth overland for three weeks of trail following. Clark stayed in high spirits but Lewis was much come upon by silence. Besides the immediate prospect of losing his friend again, the wilderness brought him a maze of wonderment that was colored with sadness. It led him to philosophy, and philosophy always made him sad.

The two parted at Louisville, and Meriwether Lewis, now possessor of a war record, an extra inch of height and considerable extra weight, rode forth alone, headed for Charlottesville and his home on indefinite furlough. On arriving he learned that the blustery and pompous James Wilkinson had

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become commanding general of the United States Army.

In peace times, armies must be built by recruiting. With all its mishaps, the Indian War had at least yielded a corps of trustable and disciplined officers, and Wilkinson chose to assign as many of these officers as he could to recruiting service; so it came about that Meriwether Lewis was back at Charlottesville as a recruiting officer, and the twenty-one-year-old had good reason for considering himself a fortunate Army man to be stationed in his home territory, for recruiting is an easy service. Hard times had come to the tobacco country and the army stood ready to take in any husky youth who cared to join, pay him five dollars in good gold every month, supply him with livable fare, and outfit him with musket, uniform, flint, lead and powder. A lieutenant's pay was thirty-eight dollars a month, which together with allowance for quarters was enough to provide the returning Virginian with uniforms and up-keep, tobacco, liquor and incidental recreation.

Albemarle had undergone changes. Mr. Thomas Jefferson was still away as American Minister to France. Reuben Lewis had left for Saint Louis to become a fur trader. For more than a year no word had come from him. Meriwether's mother was no longer a widow. During his absence she had married John Marks, who had now come to make his

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home on the Lewis farm, bringing with him his son, young John Marks, and a number of Negroes.

Lewis felt himself a man without a generation. He was twenty-one and an officer in the army. His boyhood friends were gone like fallen leaves. David Walker was dead. Reuben was gone and unaccounted for. William Clark had resigned his commission and gone back to the Clark homestead. Merne experienced the old story of the homecoming soldier who finds his home changed, his friends scattered, and all bases for contemplated delight gone like a cage full of provoking sprites.

A new generation of Virginia youths drank and gambled and swaggered at the public houses. Another springtime came. Meriwether Lewis fingered his thick black hair and meditated. He was resolved to return again to the ways of his boyhood. He would hunt again in the deep woods that he had explored in his very early youth. He would set hounds to the trail of coons. He would bag possums. He would ride bareback through the hills and swim naked in clear, free-running rivers.

All of these he did, but he was definitely through with farming. John Marks had taken his farm. John Marks had brought along Negroes and agricultural notions. The less said the better. Meriwether never was much of a hand at talking; besides, he was an Army man now. He had professional duties.

The countryside was again at farming. At night open fires leaped skywards to the rusty accompani-

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ment of frog choruses. Brush and timber were being burnt to ashes to make seed beds for new tobacco plants. John Marks and his Negroes were out plowing the Lewis fields and planting the Lewis crops.

Summer followed, green-golden and heavy with sleep. Then autumn came, bringing marvelous hunting. Recruiting continued slight. The young lieutenant abandoned his quarters at the Charlottesville tavern for prolonged and solitary ventures at hunting. He had waited duty orders and official visits, but none came. Again and again he had tried to feel at home at the Lewis homestead, but he had failed in that. His mother was disappointed.

Merne didn't know exactly why he was so sad. He supposed he was just growing into that sort of man, but he promised to visit home more often, once a week at least. Autumn faded and the Christmas holidays brought joyous celebrations, in which Meriwether participated. When the doldrums of winter came, the young army man spent more and more of his time in the woods.

"You mustn't be gone so much, Merne. Now that Reuben's gone, you're all that I have."

Maternal entreaties are hard to get around. Meriwether wanted to tell her that if it weren't for John Marks he would resign from the Army and take over the running of the farm; but his mother wouldn't understand, and besides something would surely be happening before long.

May of 1797 was a very notable month in Lewis'

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career. He was promoted to a full-fledged captaincy. No reasons were given, no questions answered, but the beginning of June saw him a captain under twenty-three—remarkable distinction for a remarkable young man. Furthermore he was ordered to expedition duty—with troops. On the last day of May he had received this letter in the somewhat drunken handwriting of Gen. James Wilkinson, Commanding General of all the Continental Army:

Fort Washington, May 20, 1797

It being deemed essential that the troops of the United States should take possession of certain military posts on the Mississippi within our territorial limits, heretofore held by the Spanish Garrisons, I have thought it proper to appoint you to this very honorable and important service, relying with entire confidence on your intrepidity, talent, zeal, patriotism and discretion. . . .

As soon as the detachment provided for can be mustered and put on board boats you will proceed on your voyage. You are to sail under the flag of the United States, and on approaching a Spanish post on this side of Louisiana, you are to announce your disposition to offer a salute provided you are assured it will be answered gun for gun. You are to return to Maesac with your detachment or to take a military position within the limits of the United States as your judgement may direct. But when once posted you are to defend your ground to the last extremity; waiting always with patience for the attack.<sup>1</sup>

This masterpiece of ambiguity was dispatched to three other officers—Capt. Isaac Guion, of the

<sup>1</sup> Claiborne, *Mississippi*. (Jackson, 1880), p. 184.



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Third Regiment, and Captains Stephen Minor and Douglas Pierce, of the First Regiment, to which Meriwether Lewis also had been assigned.

Placed in command at this important national boundary, I feel assured that you will be equal to the position and that your conduct will correspond with the dignity of the trust. The smallest default will fill me with mortification, and insure your own ruin.

That was how things stood. A force was to be led on an indefinite journey, to occupy an indefinite number of posts of indefinite ownership for an indefinite length of time. The officers, having no idea of the probable belligerency or amiability of Spain's Continentals, could do no more than guess whether they would be fired upon or saluted. They were to defend themselves to the last extremity with the full knowledge that such a course would certainly precipitate war with Spain, and so bring mortification upon the General, possible devastation to their country, not to mention stray bullets in their own persons. It was an epic in buck passing.

Meriwether Lewis packed his knapsack, bade another farewell to his Albemarle and boarded the stage for Wheeling. Six days and five nights this journey took, bounding over rutted mountain roads. At Wheeling he took a cabin boat down the river to Fort Washington.

The waters had quieted since spring floods and the voyage progressed slowly through days of languor, drinking, and festive combat with flies and

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mosquitoes. The Ohio was lovely in June, its surface reflecting the blue sky, white clouds and green trees, and the Virginian found delight in the sleepy world through which he passed.

At Fort Washington he reported to his command, two and a half weeks late. The force proper was already recruited; Guion and his two other subalterns, a surgeon's mate, seven sergeants, seven corporals, four musicians and ninety-eight privates, all were ready with supplies and accoutrements and four stubby cannons.

Two weeks of leisurely boating brought the party to St. Louis. Guion ordered the force anchored and in company with his officers, reported to the Spanish Commandant of St. Louis, who received the force courteously. He hoped that the Captain's men were competent to remedy the affairs at Natchez where the citizens were in a sorry plight for government. To be sure, Manuel Gayoso de Lamos, Brigadier in the Royal Army of Spain, was Governor Military and Political of the Colony of Natchez and its defense, but protection by American arms would be more than welcome. As to the posts on the eastern bank of the Mississippi now held with Spanish arms, the Commandant urged that his neighbors wait until authority for official evacuation might be had from the Spanish Ambassador at Washington.

To this request Captain Guion could not agree. His orders had been duly posted. As a soldier of the United States his duty was to proceed. The

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Spanish Commandant smiled. He would meet them halfway. They could go on as far as Chickasaw Bluff, the present site of Memphis. He would take their promise that they would not proceed further until orders were received from the Spanish Ambassador at Washington.

Fair enough; so the somewhat bewildered expedition changed flatboats and, having taken on a new detail of supplies, drifted down the Mississippi, with forty-six oars and twenty-four hogsheads of rye whiskey.

The force arrived at Chickasaw Bluff early in July. There they found that the Spanish garrison, Fort Ferdinand, had been partially destroyed by Spain's vacating soldiery.

The three captains and their command proceeded down river to the post of Hopefield, or Esperanza, on the west bank of the river, a log fort which also the Spaniards had abandoned.

There the sons of the Eagle rested from their journey, stored part of their supplies, mounted a blunderbuss cannon, and rechristened the stronghold, Fort Adams, in honor of the new President of the United States.

Captain Guion opened a registry booth and posted sentinels to see that all persons and crafts passing either up or down the river, wrote down their names, nationality and business. A month of record-keeping showed that Mississippi traffic was discouragingly slight.

All of which went as proof that the rivalries and

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bickering of the French and Spanish and English shippers were leaving the Father of Waters almost deserted, at a time when it should have borne a rich fruition of trade.

Hopefield was anything but a wilderness paradise. Before a week had passed at least twenty soldiers were stricken with malaria.

James McHenry, Secretary of War, forwarded more advice:

With respect to the government of your posts, you will keep the works always in a condition to resist attacks; practice the same precaution against surprise as if the United States were actually in war; fix upon regular and stated hours for exercise; pay the strictest attention to the arms, accoutrements and clothing of the men; direct four roll-calls every day.<sup>1</sup>

In late August new troops came down the river to the wilderness stronghold, members of the First and Third Regiments, in all about ninety soldiers and ten officers. Then Captain Guion made a new division of force.

Fort Adams he placed in joint charge of Captain Pierce, who commanded the artillery, and Meriwether Lewis, who commanded the infantry consisting of seventy privates, nine non-commissioned officers, and two lieutenants. With the remaining force, Guion pushed on to take command of Natchez.

Meriwether Lewis had his post and his orders. His duties were easy, a matter of roll call, occa-

<sup>1</sup> War Files, 811-2, 1799, Library of Congress, 143-7.

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sional drill, inspections of equipment, and quarters, hunting trips into the adjoining wilderness, and parleys with visiting Indians who came to loiter and to beg.

Sometimes the Virginian went forth to buy cattle or hogs from nearby frontier farmers, but most of the military stores were shipped down the river on Army barges.

Malaria was the only real enemy met by the expedition. Summer stayed on until late fall and so did malignant hordes of mosquitoes. Fort Adams had been left doctorless and with scant stores of medicine. In November, Captain Pierce, the artilleryman, went down the river to visit his fellow officers at Natchez. En route he was stricken with malaria and died; so it happened that Meriwether Lewis was left in sole command of Fort Adams for nine lazy and uneventful months, months of deadly stillness and more than occasional boredom.

Winter came, bringing torrential rains and light snows, long tedious days when the wilderness soldiery looked and longed for new assignments. Another spring came and another summer followed with promise of indefinite stranding.

Then in early August the post drew a welcome visitor, Col. John F. Hamtramck of the First United States Infantry. The colonel was en route to Natchez where he went to assume command of all the expedition and to complete the building of a new Fort Adams, this one to be located on Loftus Heights, below Natchez. Captain Lewis was to

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prepare his force for immediate transfer to this site and then await further orders.

The fact was that Meriwether had drawn a new assignment. He was to return without delay to Fort Washington and there to assume the duties of Regiment Paymaster—duties which involved carrying money from Philadelphia and proper delivery of pay to troops and officers stationed at Wheeling, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and the far outpost of Kaskaskia. This was an honor assignment. Carrying saddlebags of gold through a lawless frontier would be a high adventure and trust. He would travel and play and build friendships. He would ride over wilderness trails and on flatboats, go by coach and canoe, assured always of a delighted welcome. For at any Army post, the coming of the paymaster is truly a visit from the gods.

After Lewis became a paymaster, two years passed about which there is very little to tell. The Army, after its first faint burst of life, was returning to the dead level of a sleepy disregard. Frontiers were growing like grass in middle May. Washington remained the village of magnificent distances, filled with mosquitoes, political chicaneries, and diplomatic boorishness. Midget factories were springing up in New England. Tidewater planters were beginning to shift from tobacco to cotton, thereby shaping the channel for a great new sluice of wealth. Frigate loads of jungle Africans were being added to the Southern colonies.

As Paymaster, the Virginian was delivering satis-

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faction to both superiors and subordinates. In July of 1799, he was granted a furlough of four weeks and transportation to Charlottesville.

The situation in Albemarle was considerably changed. The young Captain had two new sisters, Ruth and Martha. Young John Marks was growing tall and manly. Old John Marks was fast failing in health. Meriwether's mother had changed but little. She was proud to welcome home her boy who had now come to be so great an Army man.

Of Reuben no word had come, not one line during the five years that Meriwether had been away at soldiering. The home of the Jeffersons waited in magnificent vacancy, but there was much talk in Albemarle, and even in the great towns of the Tidewater, that Thomas Jefferson would be in the next race for the Presidency.

## CHAPTER VI

### A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

**T**OPICS of the day were largely political. The close of the eighteenth century brought twilight to the once dominating Federalist party. Thomas Jefferson, red-haired hillman of Albemarle, radical sympathizer with Revolutionary France, was up for Presidential election. In those days the Constitution prescribed that the candidate who got the most electoral votes would be president, the next best runner, vice president.

Insurgent Republicans were out to make Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, President. Aaron Burr, of New York, generally independent, was another foremost contestant. When electoral votes were first counted, the two runners were exactly matched; accordingly, the final selection was left to a vote of the House of Representatives, the majority of whom were Federalists. That put Congress squarely between the devil and the deep sea. The majority of its members loathed the notion of taking either Jefferson or Burr; still, one or the other had to be elected, so early in 1801 Thomas Jefferson, neighbor, friend and idol of Meriwether Lewis, became President of the United States, and Col. Aaron



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Burr, of Richmond Hill, New York, Vice President.

Albemarle rejoiced mightily; so did young Lewis, who was then wintering at Fort Washington, in amiable company with the First Infantry. Lewis penned and posted an enthusiastic letter of congratulation, a letter which went unanswered for more than ten months. Thomas Jefferson was monstrously busy, but even though he was a tardy correspondent he was a loyal one. A good many years had gone by since the neighbor Virginians had met, but the Sage of Monticello remembered well when he chose to.

It was the day after New Year's, 1802 that Merne received by military post a letter from Washington City, addressed in the scraggly and rather benevolent handwriting of Thomas Jefferson. His heart action showed notable gain. Not every young Army man gets personal letters from the President of the United States.

The tidings were cordial but brief. 'All late news from Albemarle was good. The White House was full of leaks. Would Meriwether Lewis like to come to Washington City and be the President's secretary? The salary was modest, about fifty dollars a month, only a trifle more than his Army pay; but there would be friends and good company and interesting associates. He would be welcome to live in the President's household as guest of the Jefferson family. The roof would be mended. There were several good horses waiting to be rid-

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den. The Sage of Monticello had ideas he believed Meriwether Lewis would be capable of understanding.

As quickly as he could get pen to paper, the young Virginian wrote to accept the invitation. That done, he spoke a hasty farewell to fellow officers, mounted a black horse purchased directly from the quartermaster, and rode away to Philadelphia, en route to Washington.

At Philadelphia Captain Lewis handed in his file of transcripts and vouchers to the comptroller-general of the Army. As paymaster, the Virginian had worked painstakingly and well. His columns checked and his entries balanced. He had filled his position of trust and emerged with a clean slate.

The young captain shed his uniform, invested in a civilian outfit of hand-tailored serge, a cocked hat and a sky-blue overcoat, bought a carpet bag made of yellow deerskin trimmed in scarlet, and having donned his new attire and stuffed the carpet bag with his layout of worldly goods (which included one complete uniform, several pounds of flint arrowheads, a collection of steel knives, and a brace of pistols), he boarded a stage for Washington town.

It was the middle of January, and the world was drab and bleak. The nation's capital was emblematic of a hard winter. The Potomac was surly and Washington town was mud flats, bad cobblestones,

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bottomless mire, hedges of sassafras and buck bushes, and staggered lines of Negro hovels.

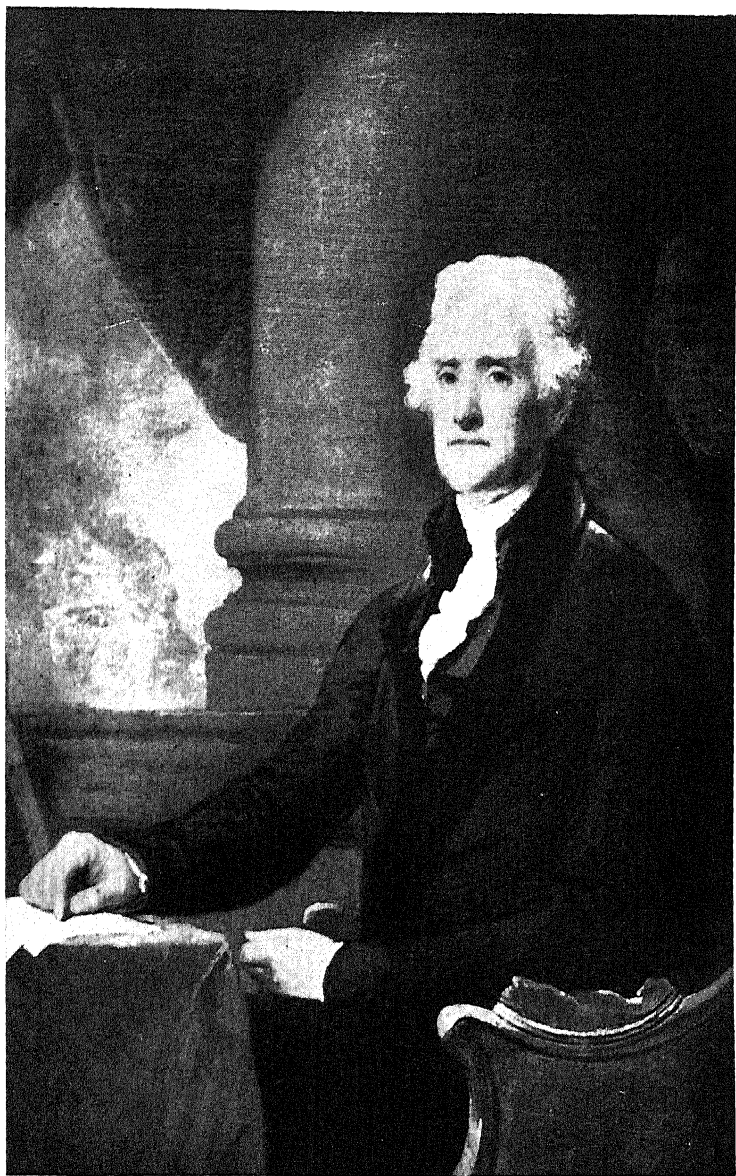
The first White House was but a rude burlesque upon the classic beauty of Monticello. The government buildings were largely envisioned in enthusiastic minds. Neighboring hills held a scattering of country homes and the town proper held a few mansions; but hostelries were sad, even less promising than the inns at Charlottesville.

As the stage pulled in, Meriwether Lewis found himself overwhelmed by a mood of stoic disillusionment; but he proceeded to the White House, there to report to the President.

Ten years had brought slight change to the Sage of Monticello. Nearing sixty he was still straight and lean and calm of visage. The charm of his smile, his pervading air of gentleness, had lived through the years. The President welcomed his young neighbor of earlier years and put him at ease.

The work, to be sure, would be hard. There would be long days of letter-writing, of copying and record filing, work to begin at dawn and last until night came; but the household of Thomas Jefferson held quietness and grace and order, wine and fiddle music and easy-going friendship. The silent and serious youth who had come to be the President's secretary fitted his job gracefully. Grace and directness were inherent to Thomas Jefferson. He was by all odds the greatest man in Washington and no one of discernment could doubt it.

The company was a brilliant one. Among its



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number were such potentialities as John Randolph, fiery congressman from Virginia; Madison, Monroe, Hamilton, Calhoun; a gay young man named Henry Clay, and a serious, deep-voiced gentleman named Andrew Jackson—all among the up-and-comers of the day; and there was the Vice President, Col. Aaron Burr, small, dapper, and sarcastic, but withal, charming and powerful. From the beginning, Meriwether rather liked Aaron Burr. The Vice President treated the young captain with all courtesy. The Virginian was more than casually interested in Burr even before meeting his daughter. After that his interest gave way to silent enthusiasm.

Second only to Thomas Jefferson, Theodosia Burr Alston was locally the most-talked-of person in all Washington. For more than a year she had been belle charming of the town. Even her marriage to John Alston, a Carolina rice planter and lawyer, brought no appreciable waning to her popularity in the capital. John Alston opportunely had returned to Carolina and his rice plantation. Theodosia, being delicate, had stayed in the better climate of Washington town, making her home with her father. She remained also the animated handbook for the day's fashion in feminine graces, a subject for masculine sighs and for feminine perusal and imitation. In company with her father, she attended horse races, cockfights, and hunting parties, as well as starched-collar balls and dinners. At the President's easy-going receptions she was especially at ease, listened attentively to men's talk,

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and at propitious moments took part in the conversation, all of which pleased Thomas Jefferson mightily and charmed Meriwether Lewis beyond compare.

Theodosia was Washington's particular idol of lovely womanhood. She was good to look upon; petite and willowy of form, gowned like a princess, handsomely featured, and along with the social graces and personal charm, Theodosia had inherited also a good share of her father's shrewd intelligence.

What was more, she wasn't victimized by the smugness, or the wishy-washy indolence that Meriwether Lewis had observed to be unfortunately a characteristic of Southern young women. Theodosia had body and mind and spirit, and she was very plainly reckoning to use all three of them.

Theodosia and Meriwether met at the White House. Thomas Jefferson was giving an informal dinner honoring the British Ambassador, who, speaking in terms of official behavior, had no worldly reason for being honored. The British Ambassador had proven himself a rude boor in any language and the ruder he waxed, the more gracious Thomas Jefferson became.

At this particular gathering John Messenger, devoted servant of the King, kept belligerent silence. Thomas Jefferson appeared in bedroom slippers, riding breeches, and waist-coat of yellow linen. He seated the score of guests at a common table, completely disregarding stations, nations and ages.

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Having taken the head, he ran his hands through his tousled and graying red hair and began an enthusiastic discourse upon mastodons of North America—ancient and perhaps surviving.

Theodosia was tremendously interested.

"Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were to find real mastodons in the country?"

Thomas Jefferson was eager as a young child speculating upon Santa Claus.

"There is a possibility that mastodons might still be found in the American West."

Theodosia smiled.

"Wouldn't they be handy for pulling carriages through the Washington mud!"

The President wagged a long forefinger toward Meriwether Lewis.

"Madam, there sits a young man who will eventually be able to tell you everything you need to know about mastodons."

The young Virginian started.

When viands were finished Theodosia sought out the tall young man.

"Do tell me about mastodons."

"I don't know anything about them."

The belle of Washington smiled.

"I always have liked honest answers."

After the overture on mastodons had gone amuck, they talked of horses.

Thomas Jefferson was a lifelong enthusiast on the subject of horses. At various times he had assembled some of the finest saddle blood on the far side



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of the James River. Now even though years were crowding upon him, even though the labors of being President were so manifold that riding for pleasure had become practically out of the question, just as hunting had, the Sage of Monticello still kept a likely stable. During the first year of his Presidency this stable had waned considerably, but three splendid mounts still remained, two sorrels and a dark claybank. At the time of Meriwether Lewis's arrival the three were waxing fat and lazy.

Jefferson had stated that something should be done about that and his secretary agreed with enthusiasm. Lewis had kept all his ardor for the saddle and therefore welcomed the chance to see to it that the President's saddle horses were properly exercised; so the young captain injected horseback riding in his day's routine. Each morning he rose at dawn and rode forth, out of the mud-splattered streets and mired flats of Washington town, up into the Virginia hills, following forest lanes and wood-hauler's trails, and bushy ravines that led to unmarked hilltops.

Theodosia Burr Alston, even though she wasn't a Southerner, was an enthusiast for saddle and cape. She had ridden back at Richmond Hill under tutelage of a New York riding master; but still she didn't ride well enough to take to the open trail alone, and besides the gentlewoman of the early nineteenth century was accustomed to ride in company. That raised a problem. Her illustrious father confessed that he loathed the saddle as he

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loathed the devil; that he found even the odor of horses more than obnoxious; that he rode only when he had to, which was altogether too often.

In the course of another dinner talk Thomas Jefferson further stated the obvious proposition that one rider is not enough for three horses; and that Theodosia might renew her equestrian activities in company with the young captain. Theodosia showed an enthusiasm within the bounds only of liberal propriety and riding lessons were promptly arranged.

The tutelage began and Meriwether couldn't help noticing that Theodosia was an excessively poor rider; that she joggled and bounced in eminent and continuous danger of falling. The first sally ended in a drenching rain in early April, and incidental mishaps, in the course of which Theodosia lost her cap and whip and became so terror stricken that she could do no more than cling to the saddle round while Lewis led her home through darkness and mud, hours late for a promised evening of work.

Aaron Burr met the bedraggled pair.

"Babes in the woods. If it hadn't been for the horses I'd have been having ideas."

Meriwether Lewis missed the point.

"Horses?"

"Yes, horses. With the filthy things about, even sin ceases to be pleasant."

Merne worked late that night, writing out a manual of horseback riding for the instruction and

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reference of his pupil. The composition was painstaking, drawn partly from the *Cavalry Manual*, partly from its writer's personal findings as to the ways and disposition of horses. As a document it was lengthy and a little obscure, but the writing must have evoked a certain degree of interest. The manuscript turned up years later among the private papers of Aaron Burr.

Trials and errors at horsemanship continued. Springtime was at hand and Meriwether Lewis invested in a riding outfit which brought about the forfeit of two months' salary. Theodosia's interest in horsemanship showed wholesome increase. The young captain's plan for early morning riding was regared to late afternoon, as the belle of the town enjoyed her morning sleep. That required that the Virginian return to work, and keep at his desk until far past midnight.

Theodosia showed progress, and it came about, entirely logically, that the President's secretary and the Vice President's daughter rode together over romantic hills and lanes in the mountainous outskirts of Washington, stopping sometimes at farmhouse hostleries for wine and cake, so delaying their return.

Theodosia apparently viewed the procedure with a mixture of humor and elation. As own daughter of Eve, she found it flattering to have the attentions of a rather handsome and pernickety young Army man. Washington held other charming young women and the prowess of smart uniform

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and military carriage is never to be underestimated.

As weeks played by, the captain and the Vice President's daughter were seen together more and more often. Meriwether Lewis had become, ex officio, arranger of the President's dinner parties, and so it happened that Theodosia and the young captain invariably were dinner partners; furthermore they danced together and went places together.

The long and short of it was that the young captain fell head-over-heels in love with Theodosia Burr Alston. That the subject of his adoration was a married woman meant very little, if anything at all, to the Virginian. Tongues wagged to be sure, but Meriwether Lewis was a product of a frontier wherein gentlemen did not hide behind cloaks of convention. He despised scandal-monging and held no fear of it.

Until now he had known little of the ways of women and until now had felt no particular desire to learn. He had been busy, his companions had been preponderantly masculine. The Virginian held a healthy estimate of his own mentality, appearance, and blood. Women, liquor, and other games of chance that have seasoned the life of soldiering since the beginning of all armies had settled but lightly upon this particular son of Mars. Except for his boyish affair with his blood cousin back in Albemarle, Meriwether Lewis still was untrammelled by Cupid.

The petty Fates must have taken a rather satanic

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delight in making Theodosia Burr Alston, twenty-three and well married, the principal of the first and only great passion of Meriwether Lewis's life.

When Merne Lewis sought to give words to his sentiments, Theodosia was pleasantly frank. As a suitor the captain was definitely past season. She liked him well enough, believed him a sterling young man blessed with a brilliant future; but Theodosia had a reputation and a husband to keep. Therefore the captain could remain a friend of the family's.

That ended it. The Captain knew too much of discipline and dignity to rebel. If Theodosia could find no place for him in the locked walls of her heart, then as an officer and a gentleman he would go his way. Theodosia, smiling much, had termed the affair romantic idiocy. Meriwether excessively heavy of heart, went back to his work; but he went back with sure conviction that they would meet again; that life would deal them a further chapter of mutual adventure. He knew that Theodosia was in politics, that she had acquired thereby a habit which once formed is hard to break. He knew that Aaron Burr was involved in cloudy and dark enterprises, closely related to political issues. He knew, too, that howsoever Theodosia might regard her lawful husband, her first allegiance went to her father.

The President had chosen Capt. Meriwether Lewis to be his secretary. The appointment was backed by reasons. The Sage of Monticello toted a

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store of conviction, which in lesser men might have been termed plain stubbornness. Writing from Annapolis on Dec. 4, 1783, Thomas Jefferson addressed George Rogers Clark, hero of Kaskaskia and elder brother of William Clark, bosom friend of Meriwether Lewis:

I find they have subscribed a very large sum of money in England for exploring the country from the Mississippi to California. They pretend it is only to promote knowledge. I am afraid they have thought of colonizing in that quarter. Some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making an attempt to search that country but I doubt whether we have enough of that kind of spirit to raise the money. How would you like to lead such a party? Though I am afraid our prospect is not worth asking the question.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing came of that letter. Thomas Jefferson was then in no official position to organize the Corps of Discovery.

Three years later, while Minister at Paris, Jefferson became acquainted with a strange young man named John Ledyard.

The Sage of Albemarle's next fling was increasingly bold. John Ledyard, native of Groton, Conn., graduate of Dartmouth, Corporal of British Marines and official chronicler of Captain Cook's third voyage to the South Seas, he picked as helmsman for exploration of Louisiana, with the alleged purpose of estimating potential fur trade with the Indians. Jefferson described the venture:

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, Dec. 4, 1783, Wisconsin Historical Society.

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He [Ledyard] being out of business and of a roaming, restless character, I suggested to him the enterprise of exploring the western part of our continent by passing through St. Petersburg to Kamchatka, and procuring a passage thence in some of the Russian vessels to Nootka Sound, whence he might make his way across the continent of America; and I undertook to have the permission of the Empress of Russia [Catherine II] solicited. He eagerly embraced the proposition and M. de Semoulin, the Russian Ambassador, and more particularly Baron Grimm, the social correspondent of the Empress, solicited her permission for him to pass through her dominion to the Western Coast of America.

The Empress refused at once, considering the expedition entirely chimerical. But Ledyard would not relinquish it, persuading himself that by proceeding to St. Petersburg he could satisfy the Empress of its practicality and obtain her permission. He went accordingly; but she was absent on a visit to some distant part of her dominions and he persued his way to within 200 miles of Kamchatka, where he was overtaken [Feb., 1788] by an arrest order from the Empress, brought back to Poland and there discharged.

Disappointed, ragged and penniless, but with a whole heart, the luckless Ledyard arrived in London half a year later and there was befriended by officials of the Hudson Bay Company, who employed him to lead an expedition to the center of Africa. He reached Cairo but died there in January, 1789.<sup>1</sup>

George Washington, too, had shown interest in an exploration of Louisiana. In 1789, Henry Knox, Washington's Secretary of War, ordered Josiah Harmar, commanding the western frontier of Cin-

<sup>1</sup> Ford's *Writings of Jefferson*, VI, pp. 94-96.

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cinnati, then Fort Washington, to "devise some practicable plan for exploring that Branch of the Mississippi called the Messorui, up to its source," and possibly on to the western coast.

Capt. John Armstrong, then in command of the frontier Army post at Louisville, volunteered to undertake the mission. Alone in a canoe this bold Army man proceeded up the Missouri some hundred miles beyond St. Louis, but meeting a band of French voyagers, learned that the river Indians were waging war among themselves and that intervention by a white man would mean sure death for him. Captain Armstrong turned back.<sup>1</sup>

Jefferson's next attempt at launching an expedition to the Pacific proved as complete a failure. The central figure in this venture was André Michaux, French botanist and proprietor of a South Carolina nursery.

In 1792 the Sage of Albemarle laid before the American Philosophical Society a plan for exploring the trans-Mississippi frontier. The Society opened a contribution for the purpose and raised the sum of \$128.25. Of this amount Washington subscribed \$25, and Jefferson and Hamilton \$12.50 each.

André Michaux left Philadelphia on July 15, 1792, his pockets jingling with the \$128.25, light-hearted and naively confident of accomplishing the mighty task before him; but the Frenchman was

<sup>1</sup> *Secretary of War Knox to General Harmar*, War Files, Jan. 16, 1790.



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meddlesome by nature and there were deterring elements at hand. First was the arrival of Citizen Genet as Minister of Revolutionary France. André turned from a direct course to visit Charleston, where Genet was reputed to have been secretly organizing a filibustering army of American frontiersmen of Carolina, Georgia, and Kentucky for the gentle purpose of privately attacking and conquering New Orleans and ultimately all other Spanish holdings west of the Mississippi.

Michaux, the nurseryman, joined with Genet and his carefree frontier rebels, joined them in swigging liquor and dreaming of a new empire to the west. That was about all that came of the conquest. Washington took a firm stand on the matter and ordered out troops to break up any attempt at free-lance conquest. Genet's popularity waned and Michaux returned penniless to his neglected flower beds.

In all the earlier ventures, Thomas Jefferson was searching for a scientist to lead the journey of discovery, a leader who, along with scholarly attainment would have the necessary "courage, prudence, habits and health adapted to the woods and some familiarity with the Indian character."

Meriwether Lewis had all these requisites except that, from a standpoint of schooling, he certainly was not a scientist; but schooling or no schooling, Thomas Jefferson had decided to appoint Meriwether Lewis commander of the first

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American expedition across the continent to the Pacific:

I have now had opportunities to know him intimately. Of courage undaunted; possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibility could divert from its direction; careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order and discipline; intimate with the Indian character, customs and principles; guarded, by exact observations of the vegetables and animals of his own countries; against losing time in the description of objects already possessed; honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding, and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves; with all these qualifications, as if selected and implanted by nature in one body for this express purpose, I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him.<sup>1</sup>

The President also decided that Meriwether Lewis must first have a new fling at books. Early in March of 1803, Captain Lewis boarded the stage for Philadelphia, there to study under the "scientific men" of that city. Jefferson insisted on secrecy of motive, as the proposed expedition would mean an indefinite trespass into a foreign-owned wilderness.

Early in the year Congress had made favorable response to his confidential message in favor of a thorough Federal estimate of Louisiana's fur resources. True, Congress probably had no real idea of what the President meant; but Jefferson was wise

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson, "Introduction" to *Lewis and Clark*, Biddle Edition.

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in the ways of congresses, so he sipped his Madeira and smoked his pipe, tranquil in his sure knowledge that the curtain was almost ready to rise upon the greatest expedition in all frontier history—confident that the mighty realm of Louisiana was soon to become property of the United States.

With young Lewis safely stowed away in the Philadelphia stage and Thomas Jefferson lounging shoeless with a decanter of wine beside him and a headful of high hopes, we may notice something of the state of the Louisiana Territory, which had remained a political plum too little known to be greatly coveted, a million square miles of idle speculations.

In the name of France La Salle had claimed all rivers running either directly or indirectly into the Mississippi. The treaties of Ryswick in 1697 and of Utrecht in 1713 both gave this claim the sanction of silence; but boundaries of England's colonies, certainly those north of Georgia, claimed indefinite western extension of their frontiers. The Treaty of Paris, which closed the war of 1763, named the Mississippi River the western boundary of England's colonies, therefore the eastern limits of Louisiana.

With the downfall of New France in plain sight, Louis XVI, striving to checkmate Britain, had ceded, in 1762, the town and neighborhood of New Orleans and all possessions of France west of the Mississippi to Spain.

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Spain, with all Louisiana to the good, kept sovereignty of this trans-Mississippi area for seventeen years, doing little with the holding except to sponsor hit-and-miss trading and exploration companies, headed by political favorites, and playfully to toss monkey-wrenches into England's better mechanized systems for fur trading.

During these years France had taken on a new pilot. Napoleon Bonaparte saw the material advantages that might come of retaking Louisiana, and, aided by the oily-tongued Talleyrand, set out to regain it.

According to the terms of the still mysterious Treaty of Ildefonso, France wheedled Spain out of Louisiana; but Spain's colonists held to the age-tested proverb that possession is nine points of the law. France took no particular pains to discourage the view, and Louisiana stayed a rather dim wilderness with a supposed population of about fifty thousand.

## CHAPTER VII

### PLANNING A FAR JOURNEY

**T**HOMAS JEFFERSON sent by Meriwether Lewis an introduction to Benjamin Rush, a physician of Philadelphia and a signer of the Declaration of Independence:

I wish to mention to you in confidence that I have obtained authority from Congress to undertake the long desired object of exploring the Missouri and whatever river, heading with that, leads into the western oceans. About 10 chosen woodsmen headed by Capt. Lewis, my secretary, will set out on it immediately and probably accomplish it in two seasons. Capt. Lewis is brave, prudent; habituated to the woods, and familiar with the Indian manner and character. . . . I ask the favor of you to prepare some notes of such particulars as may occur in his journey & which you think should draw his attention and inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

A month later the Sage of Albemarle sought to locate his straying secretary:

Dear Sir: I have not been able to hear anything of you since Mar. 7; till two or three days ago, Lieut. Wilson told me you would leave Frederick the 18th inst. & that you had been detained until then at Harper's Ferry, where Capt. Murray also told me he had seen you. I have no doubt you have used every possible exertion to

<sup>1</sup> Ford, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 8, p. 219.

## PLANNING A FAR JOURNEY

get off, and therefore we have only to lament what cannot be helped, as the delay of a month now may lose a year in the end. Will you be so good as to call on Doct. Bollman with my compliments & pay for some wine sent me? I suppose it will be about 12 Doll. but it must be whatever he says. I will also thank you to purchase me a leopard or tyger's skin, such as the covers of our saddles are cut out of. . . . I have letters from your friends at Albemarle. Accept my affectionate salutations.

TH. JEFFERSON.<sup>1</sup>

Next, Jefferson forwarded a rough draft of official instructions for the proposed expedition to the Pacific suggesting that the youthful commander indicate any changes he saw fit:

The idea that you are going to explore the Missouri has been generally given out; it satisfies public curiosity and masks sufficiently the real destination. . . .

The object of our mission is to explore the Missouri river and such principal streams of it, by communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river, may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across the continent, for the purpose of commerce. . . .

Your observations are to be taken with great pains and accuracy; to be entered distinctly and intelligently for others as well as yourself; to comprehend all the elements necessary, with the aid of the usual tables to fix the latitude and longitude of the places at which they are taken; and are to be rendered to the war office, for the purpose of having the calculation made concurrently by proper persons within the United States. Several

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, Library of Congress, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 2, Vol. 51, doc. 116.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

copies of these as well as your other notes, should be made at leisure times, and put into the care of the most trustworthy of your attendants to guard, by multiplying them against the accidental loss to which they will be exposed. A further guard would be that one of these copies be on the cuticular membranes of the paper birch, as that is less likely to injury from damp than common paper. . . .

In all your intercourse with the natives, treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit; allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey; satisfy them of its innocence. . . .

If a few of their influential chiefs within a practicable distance, wish to visit us, arrange such a visit with them, and furnish them with authority to call on our officers on their entering the United States to have them conveyed to this place at the public expense. If any of them should wish to have some of their young people brought up with us, and taught such arts as may be useful to them, we will receive, instruct them and take care of them. Such a mission, whether of influential chiefs or of young people, would give some security to your own party. . . .

It is impossible for us to foresee in what manner you will be received by those people; whether with hospitality or hostility, so it is impossible to prescribe the exact degree of perseverance with which you are to pursue your journey. We value too much the lives of citizens to offer them to probable distruction. . . .

On your arrival at the coast, endeavor to learn if there be any port within your reach frequented by the sea vessels of any nation and to send two of your trusty people back by sea, in such a way as shall appear practicable, with a copy of your notes; and should you be of the opinion that the return of your party by the way they went will be imminently dangerous, then ship the

## PLANNING A FAR JOURNEY

whole and return by sea, by the way either of Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope as you shall be able. As you will be without money, clothes or provisions, you must endeavor to use the credit of the United States to obtain them; for which open letters of credit shall be furnished you authorizing you to draw upon the executive of the United States.

To provide on the accident of your death, against anarchy, dispersion and the consequent danger of your party, and total failure of the enterprise, you are hereby authorized by an instrument signed and written in your hand, to name the person among them who shall succeed to the command on your decease, and by like instrument to change the nomination from time to time, as further experience of the characters accompanying you shall point out superior fitness; and all the powers and authorities given to yourself are, in event of your death, transferred to and invested in the successor so named, with further power to him and his successors, who on the death of his predecessor, shall be invested with all powers and authority given to yourself.

THOMAS JEFFERSON,  
President of the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

A few days later Jefferson suffered a terse afterthought:

I think we spoke together of your carrying some cast iron corn mills to give to the Indians or to trade with them, as well as for your own use; lest however I should be mistaken, I mention them now.

On the twenty-ninth of May, Meriwether Lewis wrote his final letter from Philadelphia:

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 1, Vol. 9, doc. 269.



## MERIWETHER LEWIS

Dear Sir: I have at length so far succeeded in making the necessary preparation for my intended journey as to be enabled to fix the sixth or seventh of June as the probable time of my departure for Washington. All the articles have been either procured, or are in such state of forwardness in the hands of the workmen as to induce me to hope that my stay here after that period will be unnecessary.

I paid Mr. Duflet 74\$ and Dr. Bolman 18\$ I have also purchased a Vigona blanket, of which I hope you will approve; it is about the size of a common three point blanket, the skins appear to be two thin for rough service tho' it is a very pretty thing; it is the best I could find, the price was 10\$. The Tiger's skin you requested I have not been able to procure, those I have seen appear to be too small for your purpose, perhaps they may be had in Baltimore, if so I will get one in that place. The pole chain and 2 pair of fleecy socks have been procured. I received your watch this morning from Dr. Voigh, who tells me she is well regulated and in perfect order.<sup>1</sup>

Meriwether Lewis had finished his special schooling. The young Virginian's longing to get started was second only to the older Virginian's wish for the same thing.

First in his list of articles purchased of Israel Whelan, Purveyor of Public Supplies, were Indian presents:

12 Tomahawks	15 doz. Pewter Looking
47½ yards Red Flannel	Glasses
1 Dozen Ivory Combs	12 pairs striped silk ribbon
4 Dos. Butcher Knives	

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 2, Vol. 51, doc. 99.

## PLANNING A FAR JOURNEY

6 packages paper bells	12 Dos. pocket looking
73 bunches Assorted	Glasses
Beads	2 lbs beads
1 doz. Needle cases	2 doz. Red striped Tapes
8½ pounds Red Beads	1 box with 100 larger ones
8 Brass Kettles	3½ doz. Assorted Tinsel
500 Broaches	Bands
2 Corn Mills	2¾ doz. lockets
12 lbs Brass Wire	2 doz. Earrings
4,600 Assorted Needles	12 lbs Brass Strips
1 gross iron combs	72 Rings
2 gross assorted thimbles	15 doz. Scissors
8 lbs red lead	14 lbs Knitting Needles
130 rolls Tobacco Twists	2,800 Assorted fish hooks
15 Blankets	3 gross Curtain Rings
6½ lb strips Sheet Iron	11 doz. Pocket knives
11 packages Handker-	2 lbs Vermillion
chiefs	48 Calico Ruffled shirts
22 yds. Scarlet Cloth	8 Mocasin Awls

The total cost of these gifts was \$669.50, the largest single outlay for the entire expedition.

Camp equipment included tin horns, lanterns, lamps, soup canisters, pint tumblers, fishhooks, lines, a sportsman flask, brass kettles, saucepans, a corn mill, scales, a ruler, shears, tablespoons, drawing knives, gimlets, cobbler's supplies, vices, plyers, saws, chisels, hatchets, a whetstone and finally twelve pounds of castile soap, all for a total of \$117.67.

Arms and ammunition, in addition to the rifles with which the soldiers would come equipped, included a pair of pocket pistols, 176 pounds of gunpowder, 52 powder canisters, 15 powder horns and

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

pouches, 15 scalping knives and belts, 15 gun slings, 30 brushes and wires, 15 painted knapsacks, 500 rifle flints, 125 musket flints, 50 pounds of best rifle powder, a pair of horseman's pistols and 420 pounds of lead. Two boxes of assorted medicines he bought for \$94.49. Food supplies included 193 pounds of soup stock at a dollar a pound, and 30 gallons of whiskey at about \$2.40 a gallon.

The camp equipment cost \$117.67. The first boat, fully equipped, cost a trifle less than \$200. Eight tents, sheeting, linen and ten bags represented a final outlay of \$119.39. So the expedition was fitted out, well within range of the \$2,500 allowed.

Meriwether returned to Washington early in June and after three weeks of hurried labor at secretarial duties, left on the twenty-second for Harper's Ferry that he might begin actual loading for the transportation of his equipment. Ensuing letters chronicle the myriad difficulties and proved the manifold patience of Thomas Jefferson. On the eighth of July, Lewis wrote to Jefferson from Harper's Ferry:

Yesterday I shot my guns and examined the several articles which had been manufactured for me at this place; they appear to be well executed. Accept the assurance of my sincere wishes for your health and happiness.

Your friend and Obt. Servt.

MERIWETHER LEWIS

MR. JEFFERSON, Presidt of U. S.

## PLANNING A FAR JOURNEY

Three days later the ever-observant Mr. Jefferson, President of the United States, replied:

I enclose your pocket book left here. If the dirk will appear passable by post, that shall also be sent.

## CHAPTER VIII

RE-ENTERS WILLIAM CLARK

CAPTAIN LEWIS had toyed with the idea of inviting William Clark, his boyhood friend and his comrade under Mad Anthony Wayne, to join in the expedition to the Pacific. Now that the starting date grew nearer, he wrote and posted this letter:

. . . From the long friendship and confidence which has subsisted between us I feel no hesitation in making to you the following communication under the fulest impression that it will be held by you inviolably secret untill, I see you, or you shall hear again from me.

During the last session of Congress a law was passed intituled, "An Act making an appropriation for extending the external commerce of the United States." The object of this Act as understood by its framers was to give the sanction of the government to exploreing the interior of the continent of North America, or the part of it bordering on the Missouri & Columbia Rivers.

You must know in the first place that very sanguine expectations are at this time formed by our government that the whole of this immense country watered by the Mississippi and its tributary streams, Missouri included, will be the property of the U States in less than 12 months from this date; but here let me again impress you with the necessity of keeping this matter a perfect secret.

## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

If therefore there is anything under the circumstances, in this enterprise, which would induce you to participate with me in its fatigues, its dangers and its honors, believe me there is no man on earth with whom I should feel equally pleased in sharing them as with yourself.

Your situation if joined with me in this mission will in all respects be precisely such as my own. Pray write to me on this subject as early as possible.

With sincere and affectionate regards

Your friend & Hub' serv't

MERIWETHER LEWIS<sup>1</sup>

The offer generously and enthusiastically made, was generously accepted. William Clark answered:

Clarksville, 19 July, 1803.

I received by yesterday's mail your letter of the 19 ult to the contents of which I received with *much pleasure*. The enterprise and mission is such as I have long anticipated. I am much pleased with and as my situation in life will admit of my absence the length of time necessary to accomplish such an undertaking—I will cheerfully join you in an "Official Character" as mentioned in your letter and partake of all the Dangers Difficulties and fatigues and I anticipate the honors & regard of the result of such an enterprise should we be successful in accomplishing it. This is an immense undertaking fraught with numerous difficulties, but my friend I can assure you that no man lives with whom I would prefer to undertake and share the Difficulties of such a trip than yourself. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Two days before Clark's acceptance, President Jefferson wrote another note to his adventuring

<sup>1</sup> From Original MS owned by Eleanor G. Voorhis.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

secretary telling him that the treaty was received from Paris.

Washington, July 15, 1803.

Dear Sir: I dropped you a line on the 11 inst. and last night recieved yours of the 8th.

Last night also we recieved the treaty from Paris ceding Louisiana according to the bounds to which France has a right, price  $11\frac{1}{4}$  millions of Dollars, besides paying certain debts of France to our citizens which will be from 1, to 4, millions. . . .

Jefferson here states the commonly accepted fact that the treaty was received in Washington on July 14th, 1803; but let us bear in mind Lewis's mention of the matter to Clark. Let us notice this letter which Thomas Jefferson on the third of July wrote to Henry Peyroux de la Coudrenaire, then Spanish commandant at Sta. Genevieve and St. Louis.

Washington, July 3, 1803.

. . . I cannot omit the satisfaction of writing to you by Capt. Lewis, an officer of our army & for some time past my secretary. As our former acquaintance was a mixt one of science and business so is the occasion of renewing it. You know that geography of the Missouri and the most convenient water communication from the head of that to the Pacific Ocean is a desideratum not yet satisfied. Since coming to the administration of the U. S. I have taken the earliest opportunity in my power to have that communication explored; and Capt. Lewis with a party of twelve or fifteen men is authorized to do it. His journey being merely literary, to inform us of the geography & natural history of the country, I have procured a passport for him & his party, from the

## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

minister of France here, it being agreed between him and the Spanish ministry, that the country having been ceded to France, her minister may most properly give authority for the journey.

This was the state of things when the passport was given which was sometimes since. But before Capt. Lewis' actual departure we learn through a channel of unquestionable information that France has ceded the whole country of Louisiana to the U. S. concluded by a treaty concluded in the first days of May. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Yet on the 14th day of July at making formal announcement of receipt of the treaty, Thomas Jefferson declared its coming "a bolt from the blue." So spoke Jefferson, the press, and knowing citizens of the day, but correspondence files give their own version of the gaining of Louisiana. The Sage of Monticello informs his dubious and sometimes too knowing acquaintance, Coudrenaire, that the Territory of Louisiana had become American property early in May of 1803. Writing to Clark on the 19th of June, 1803, the President's lone secretary also had pointed out that state of affairs.

Good evidence stands that the actual taking of Louisiana was a feat accomplished by a secret treaty. Thomas Jefferson had played a wily and deliberate hand, a play that showed shrewd knowledge of the spirit and temper of the French people, of the crafts and secrecies of international politics.

At any rate, the "bolt from the blue" had duly descended. Secrecy as to the real mission of this expedition to the Pacific was no longer needed.

<sup>1</sup> Ford, *Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 8, p. 199.



## MERIWETHER LEWIS

Though the purchase had not been ratified yet by Congress, still France, through her now open offer to sell, could not gracefully forbid the journey, and neither England nor Spain had legal grounds for protest.

Meriwether Lewis breathed more freely and continued preparations with rising enthusiasm. This was fortunate, too, for now new troubles were crowding about like flies in an English tavern. He next wrote Jefferson from Pittsburgh:

July 22d, 1803.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 11 and 15th Inst. were duly received, the former on the 18th inst. the latter on this day. For my pocketbook I thank you; the dirk could not well come by post, nor is it of any moment to me, the knives that were made at Harper's ferry will answer my purpose equally as well and perhaps better; it can therefore be taken care of untill my return; the bridle is of no consequence at all. After the receipt of this letter I think it will be best to direct me at Louisville Kentucky.

The person who contracted to build my boat engaged to have it in readiness by the 20th inst.; in this however he failed; he pleads having been disappointed in procuring timber. . . . I visit him every day, and endeavor by every means within my power to hasten the completion of the work.

The current of the Ohio is extremely low and continues to decline; this may impede my progress but shall not prevent my proceeding being determined to get forward though I should not be able to make a greater distance than a mile a day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 2, Vol. 51, doc. 100.

## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

Late in July, William Clark wrote again repeating his acceptance, and Meriwether Lewis hastened to pen his boyishly enthusiastic reply:

Pittsburg, August 3rd, 1803.

Dear Clark:

Yours of the 19th and 24th Ult. have been duly received and be assured I feel myself much gratified by your decision; for I could neither hope, wish or expect from a union with any man on earth more perfect support or further aid in the discharge of the several duties of the mission than that which I am confident I shall derive from being associated with yourself. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Merne Lewis was eager to be off, eager to forget the dust-scattered and mosquito-infested capital, which held for the moment only sad emptiness. The administration was muttering low words. Col. Aaron Burr, Vice President, having set in play much ill-breathed gossip, had now abandoned all official duties and was roaring here and yonder through the hinterlands, leaving trails of uproarious scandalmonging. The President was being derided and mud-splashed by an insulting Federalist press. Moreover, Theodosia was gone—Theodosia whom Meriwether had loved too late.

Early in September Lewis again reported to Thomas Jefferson, telling of more troubles:

Dear Sir: It was not untill 7 O'Clock on the morning of the 31st Ultimo. that my boat was completed, she was instantly loaded, and at 10 A.M. on the same day I left Pittsburg, where I had been most shamefully de-

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 2, Vol. 51, doc. 100.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

tained by the unpardonable negligence of my boat builder. According to his usual custom, he got drunk, quarreled with his workmen, and several of them left him, nor could they be prevailed on to return; I threatened him with the penalty of his contract, and exacted a promise of greater sobriety in future which, he took care to perform with as little good faith, as he had his previous promise with regard to the boat, continuing to be constantly drunk or sick. . . .

Five days later, the voyager again reported :

On Board My Boat Opposite Marietta, September 13th, 1803.

Dear Sir: I arrived here at 7 P.M., and shall pursue my journey early tomorrow. I have been enabled to get on without the necessity of employing oxen or horses to drag my boat over the riffles except in two instances; tho I find them the most efficient sailors in the present state of navigation of this river, although they may be considered somewhat clumsy.

On the third of October Lewis, then at Cincinnati, again wrote to Jefferson a letter hurried and badly spelled :

As this session of Congress has commenced earlier than usual, and as from a variety of incidental circumstances my progress has been unexpectedly delayed, and feeling as I do in the most anxious manner a wish to keep them in a good humor on the subject of the expedition in which I am engaged, I have concluded to make a tour this winter on horseback of some hundred miles through the most interesting portion of the country adjoining my winter establishment; perhaps it may be up the Canceze River and towards Santafee, at all events it will be on the south side of the Missouri.

## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

Should I find that Mr. Clark can with propriety also leave the party, I will prevail upon him also to undertake a similar excurtion through some other portion of the country; by this means I hope and am persuaded that by the middle of February or 1st of March I shall be enabled to procure and forward to you such information relative to the Country; which, if it dose not produce a conviction of the utility of this project will at least procure the further toleration of the expedition.

Thomas Jefferson answered:

We are strongly of the opinion here that you had better not enter the Missouri until the spring, but as you have a view of all circumstances on the spot, we do not pretend to enjoin it, but leave it to your own judgment in which we have entire confidence. One thing however we are decided in: that you must not undertake the winter excursion which you propose in yours of Oct. 3. such an excursion will be more dangerous than the main expedition up the Missouri, & would, by an accident to you, hazard our main object, which, since the acquisition of Louisiana interests everybody in the highest degree.

The object of your mission is single, the direct water communication from sea to sea formed by the bed of the Missouri & perhaps the Oregon. By having Mr. Clark with you we consider the expedition double manned, & therefore the less liable to failure, for which reason neither of you should be exposed to risque by going off your line.

Our friends and acquaintances here & in Albemarle are all well as far as I have heard; and I recollect no other small news worth communicating; present my friendly salutations to mr. Clarke, & accept them affectionately yourself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 1, Vol. 9, doc. 305.



## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

Thomas Jefferson wrote next on the thirteenth of January, 1804:

I now enclose you a map of the Missouri as far as the Mandans, 12 or 1,500 miles. it is said to be very accurate having been done by a Mr. Evans by order of the Spanish government but whether he corrected by astronomical observation or not we are not informed. I hope this will reach you before your final departure. the acquisition of the country through which you are to pass has inspired the public generally with a great deal of interest in your enterprize. the enquiries are perpetual as to your progress.

The Fed[eralists] alone still treat it as a philosophy and would rejoice in it's failure. their bitterness increases with the diminution of their numbers and despair of resurrection. I hope you will take care of yourself, and be the living witness of their malice and folly. present my salutations to mr. Clarke, assure all your party that we have our eyes turned on them with anxiety for their safety & the success of their enterprize. accept yourself assurance of of sincere attachment.<sup>1</sup>

Nine days later the President again wrote to Meriwether Lewis, suggesting that the young Virginian take particular pains to assure all settlers and Indians

"henceforward we become their fathers and friends, and that we shall endeavor that they shall have no cause to lament the change; that we sent you to inquire into the nature of the country & the nations inhabiting it, to know at what places and times we must establish stores of goods among them, to exchange for their peltries.

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Rolls, *Jefferson Papers*, Series 1, Vol. 10, doc. 1.

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Jefferson closed the letter with some particular news. Meriwether Lewis had been elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society.

Your diploma is lodged with me; but I suppose it is safest to keep it here & not send it after you.

Lewis's answer was written from St. Louis on the twenty-sixth of March and is devoted principally to a description of the wild plums and Osage apples gathered in the vicinity of St. Louis. He sent the President shoots of both for planting.

Meanwhile, William Clark tiring of indeterminate loafing, had proceeded to Camp River Dubois, where he was drilling a first gathering of volunteers for the exploration. The Virginian still showed some measure of worry as to the apt choice of men. Clark, good-natured and fraternal of spirits, was not at all sure that the material at hand could ever be built into a workmanlike corps of discoverers, but he determined to do his best with the means.

Lewis docked his boat and joined the party at Camp River Dubois late in January of 1804, bringing along his toilworn boat crew. By this time the start had been postponed until the middle of May, which meant that the explorers-to-be had before them another three months of hunting and sleeping and easy living.

During all the winter he gave a good share of his time and attention to the social and casual life of St. Louis. Since Thomas Jefferson had reflected

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none of the younger Virginian's enthusiasm for a wintry side-trip for appeasing the bickerings of Congress, Captain Lewis was out to drink and jest and forget, for such are a soldier's deserved pleasures. Billy Clark assumed the lion's share of military work, while his companion spent most of his time at the dozing village of St. Louis visiting, drinking and gambling with fur dealers and supply merchants. He also interviewed tramp river men and vagrant Indians and served a witness to the formal annexation of this northern capital of Louisiana to the American Commonwealth. He danced and disported in the handsome uniforms which represented the principal savings of two years of presidential secretaryship.

For the first time in his twenty-nine adventurous years, Meriwether Lewis was resolved to play and to forget. It was his first real vacation since his graduation from Squire Tally's select school for young gentlemen, eleven years before.

There were plain signs of trouble in the matter of hiring outside help. Soldiers were willing to venture further, look more lightly upon danger, and to plunge more wholeheartedly into the undertaking than were any available hirelings in or near St. Louis. Early in May, Lewis wrote to assure Clark: "Mr. Choteau has procured seven French voyagers engaged to go as far as the Mandans—but they will not agree to go farther."

Guides or no guides, the expedition would go



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forth by mid-May. Meriwether Lewis chose to write one more letter, this one to his mother back in Charlottesville, just two days before the corps went forth. The letter, dated at Camp River Dubois, May 12, 1804, carries a note of reassurance more gallant perhaps than truthful.

The day after tomorrow I shall set out for the western country. I had calculated on the pleasure of visiting you before I started, but circumstances have rendered it impossible. My absence will probably be equal to fifteen or eighteen months.

The nature of this expedition is by no means dangerous. My route will be altogether through tribes of Indians friendly to the United States, therefore I consider the chances of life just as much in my favor as I should conceive them if I were at home. The charge of this expedition is honorable to myself, as it is important to my country.

For its fatigues I feel myself perfectly prepared nor do I doubt my health & strength of constitution to bear me through it. I go with the most preconception in my own mind of returning safe, and hope, therefore, that you will not suffer yourself to indulge in any anxiety for my safety.

Adieu and believe me your affectionate son,  
MERIWETHER.<sup>1</sup>

With a brilliant career already behind him, the Virginian stood facing westward to wilderness night, to mighty adventure which would grant him surcease of sadness and the sundry and subjective incidentals which had robbed him of so much hap-

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy Anderson Collection, Ivy Depot, Va.

## REËNTERS WILLIAM CLARK

piness. Meriwether Lewis girded himself for conquest, and as memories retreated before a new serving of adventurous reality, the youthful captain was glad. Combat was the most precious asset that he knew.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE START

**S**AILING day was at hand. Packing was done. Here was the final roster of force:

Meriwether Lewis, Captain in First United States Infantry, commanding.

William Clark, Second Lieutenant in United States Artillery.

Sergeants—John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor and Charles Floyd.

Corporal, Richard Warfington.

Privates—Patrick Gass, William Bratton, John Colter, John Collins, Peter Cruzatte, Reuben Fields, Joseph Fields, Robert Frazier, George Gibson, Silas Goodrich, Hugh Hall, Thomas P. Howard, Francis Labuche, La Liberte, Hugh McNeal, John Newman, John Potts, George Shannon, M. B. Reed, John Shields, John B. Thompson, William Werner, Joseph Whitehouse, Alexander Willard, Richard Winsor, Peter Wiser, and George Druillard.

York, a Negro servant, belonging to William Clark.

The Virginian had found and adopted a foot-loose and homeless mongrel in the port of St. Louis, and named him Brewster. He was powerful, fleet

## THE START

and good-natured, highly competent at trailing game, joining frolics, and woofing at passersby. Brewster was a promising addition.

The adventurers were feeling the surge of spring-time. Camp River Dubois, a hastily built square of log cabins on an abandoned farm across the river due east from St. Louis, had been the scene of good and merry company. The soldiery had basked in mellow sunshine, with plenty to eat, plenty to drink, and not much to do. Drillings had been generously interspersed with furloughs in the dozing river towns of St. Louis and St. Charles. Uniforms had lapsed into handy donnings of buckskin and corduroy, and heavy boots with brass toes and thong laces.

Captain Meriwether Lewis had spent his final fortnight in St. Louis buying supplies and absorbing information on the habits and course of the great Missouri.

William Clark, second in command, in keeping with standard military tradition had taken on himself the orphan's share of work. He drilled the men, when they were drilled, supervised the refitting of the boat and attended to the building and testing of two new ones, both open rowboats with miniature masts and sails. He directed a final outfitting of supplies—sugar and salt, tobacco and whiskey, flour and meal, shoes and clothing, ammunition and gifts. By the fourteenth of May, Clark had all boats and supplies in order, and at four in the afternoon, the expedition left its camp at River Dubois, "all in health and readiness to set

and the Continent p. 2  
Monday May 4<sup>th</sup> 1804.

Rained the fore part of the day  
I determined to go as far as St.  
Charles a French Village & lay  
up the Missouri, and wait at  
that place until Col. Lewis  
could finish the business in  
which he was obliged to attend  
to at St. Louis and join me by  
Land from that place 24 miles;  
by this movement I calculated  
that if any alterations in the  
loading of the Vessels or other  
changes necessary that they  
might be made at St. Charles.

I set out at 4 o'clock P.M. in  
the presence of many of the  
neighbouring inhabitants, and  
proceeded on under gentle breeze  
up the Missouri to the upper  
Point of the 1<sup>st</sup> Island 4 miles

## THE START

out," and boats were launched under a "gentle breeze up the Missouri." Brown waves splashed sandy banks. Clusterings of willows and ash and water oaks, all with brave young leaves, gave lazy challenge to the might of the sun.

A good-sized party was on hand to see them off, farmers and half-breeds dressed in buckskin, hunters with coonskin caps and raiment of sagging corduroy, fat and red-faced storekeepers, saloon customers and countryside loafers in general. There were cheering and well-wishing and loud talk. Each man of the expedition drew a dram of good whiskey and a keg of the same spirits went as pass-out to the well-wishers.

Clark, broad-shouldered and medium in height, boarded the big keel boat, and exhorted his thirty-seven good men to come ahead. The good men came, a strapping and burly crew, dressed helter skelter, some in uniforms, some in buckskin, some in mixings of the two; but they had one feature in common—all wore straw hats, broad brimmed and glisteningly new work hats, distinctly agrarian in pattern. Clark's habit showed a hardy defiance to military regulation. He wore a straw hat, an artilleryman's coat of blue and red serge with gold braid, offsetting brown corduroy breeches that lost themselves in ponderous rough leather boots. The Kentuckian grinned and waved his hat, then he noticed that he was no longer the center of interest, that York, his manservant, had taken the spot light.

York, monstrous and shiny black, capered to the

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foredeck, resplendent in an outfit of baggy blue denim cloth, tied at the middle with a blood-red sash. Choosing a hall immediately in the rear of his captain, the Negro fell to a clog dance, an uproarious cadence of hard leather pummeling hard wood. The Corps of Discovery made commensurate applause.

The flotilla thus was launched under clear skies and a light wind. There were three crafts—a keel boat fifty-five feet long, drawing three feet of water, propelled by twenty-two oars and a sail, equipped with both a forecastle and a cabin, and with center parts guarded by a four-foot breastwork of wood; and two pirogues, open row boats; one with seven locks of oars, the other with six, both fitted with sails.

The start was good. The soldiery made merry at first tryout at the oars. Cargoes had been divided into seven bales and a box. Besides these, there were fourteen bales of Indian presents, and Brewster, the Captain's dog, was tethered to the forecastle of the keel boat.

Two soldiers rode horseback along the river banks, armed for hunting and patrol.

When night came the party made a first camp on a river island, opposite the confluence of Coldwater Creek. Night brought a thunderstorm that drenched the opening camp with a cold downpour. Next day the Corps made ten miles, during the course of which the boats, too heavily loaded at the stern, often scraped on log drifts. Another day

## THE START

brought them to St. Charles where Meriwether Lewis had bargained to await their coming; but the Virginian was late, so the Corps waited at the friendly watering village of four hundred people, "poore, polite & harmonious." Sore and sunburned from their first try at rowing, the wanderers were happy to join in loafing, habitual pastime of the natives. Three days of waiting were well seasoned with cockfights and shooting bees and tavern play. William Clark modestly confessed: "Seven ladies visited me today."

Meriwether Lewis appeared considerably disguised. He had laid aside his uniform and braids and boots for a suit of buckskin with accompanying moccasins and coonskin cap. He had ridden overland from St. Louis, twenty-four miles, in company with Capt. Amos Stoddard of the First Infantry. All in all he was in a gay mood, which was exceptional for Meriwether Lewis. He laughed much but listened more and spent a gay evening at a convivial saloon.

Then on the afternoon of May 31, the Corps of Discovery once more manned boats and lifted anchor. Villagers lined the water front as the flotilla pushed forth "under three cheers from the gentlemen on the bank." Brewster barked uproariously and wagged his bushy tail. Meriwether Lewis waved a salute from the foredeck of the keel boat. William Clark guided out the red row boat. Settlers and trappers hailed them from the river banks



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and fired salutes with long-barreled muskets. The Corps deserted oars momentarily to return the salutes and to have a final drink on their good leaders. . . .

Travel soon brought troubles. The slovenly bed of the Missouri was crowded with sandbars, interspersed with violent currents. In these the overloaded boats wallowed and lurched. Snags were many and unseeable in the murky water. Dense forests lined the river banks and sail masts repeatedly raked against low tree limbs.

Leaving Clark in command of the boats, Lewis chose to walk along the bank, gathering specimens of plants and leaves and searching for signs of Indians. As commander, he was responsible for the safety of his force; besides, he liked the woods, and liked being alone. Brewster trotted at his master's heels.

The journey proceeded in peace, on into the mighty stillness of the unknown West. Meriwether noted in his journal:

So far we have experienced more difficulties from the navigation of the Missouri than dangers from the savages. Such is the velocity of the current at all seasons of the year, from the entrance of the Missouri to the mouth of the great river Platte, that it is impossible to resist the force by means of oars or poles in the main channel of the river; the eddies which therefore generally exist on one side or the other of the river are sought by navigators, but these are almost universally encumbered with concealed timber, or else are within reach of the falling banks.

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But there were compensations.

Game is very abundant, and seems to increase as we progress, our prospect of starving is therefore consequently small. On the lower portion of the Missouri, from its junction with the Mississippi to the entrance of the Osage river we met with some deer, bear and turkeys.

Early in June the wanderers saw sure signs of buffalo trails, beaten deep with the passing of uncounted thousands of hoofs. Plains had been cropped of young grass. Mud bogs showed where the mighty beasts had wallowed. Salt licks, along the banks of the meandering creek, showed pawings and stampings of heavy feet.

Indians would be following the buffalo. The Corps of Discovery took better care of their fire-arms and powder, and Meriwether Lewis, continuing by land, donned two pistols in place of one.

The river channel was dotted with islands now—scores, hundreds of them, heavily grown to willows and reeds. Mosquitoes and buffalo gnats came in malignant hordes; thunder storms gathered over the river and deluged the tiny fleet; cold nights followed blistering hot days, then vanished as suddenly as they had come.

Rank and military titles faded like snow in April. Always dark of complexion, Meriwether Lewis was now blackened like a Creole, his muscles hard as bronze. The Virginian was forming an intense dislike for boats and river travel. He chose to travel afoot along the banks, making collections of

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leaves and pelts and ore specimens, and helping to bring supplies of meat to the chosen camping place. Clark stayed in command of the boats, fighting the oars with all his strength.

In late June the wanderers sighted two rafts making a wallowing course down river. One carried buffalo hides, another buffalo tallow; both were manned by half-breed traders who had come from among the Sioux Indians on the Platte River. The boats drew up for parley. Three of the traders jabbered in Creole French and held forth tin cups, begging whiskey.

Meriwether Lewis looked to the exception, who spoke choppy but understandable English. This one was a tall, coppery complexioned man, obviously part Indian and obviously shrewd. Being warmed with a liberal pouring of whiskey, he explained that his name was Charbonneau, that his mother had been a Sioux Indian, his father a French riverman; that he had lived among the Mandans and traded with them for twenty years; that he knew their language and ways, and that he had a squaw of the Snake tribe.

The Captain bargained. His Corps needed an interpreter and a guide. If Charbonneau would take the job, he would get food and ammunition and twenty-five good American dollars every month.

The half-breed showed a faint glint of interest. It was a deal. He would hand over his interest in the raft and buffalo hides to the Frenchmen. He

## THE START

might as well. The Frenchmen would cheat him out of them as soon as he got to St. Louis anyhow. He would join the Corps and introduce them to the up-river tribes. He had but one favor to ask. Back in a Mandan village he had left his squaw. He wanted to take her along. His squaw was called Sacajawea, or Bird Woman. She was a good woman. She could row and she could carry and stand beatings.

Lewis pondered. He had been looking forward to getting along without women; but he wanted the half-breed's services and good will, so he answered evasively and Charbonneau joined the Corps. The rest of the raftsmen went on their floundering way, hilariously drunk.

By now the Western wilderness had become a hunter's heaven. Mighty herds of buffalo, sometimes five thousand strong, grazed on the far-stretching plains. Elk, deer, antelopes, turkeys and squirrels were plentiful. Victuals were cooked over open fires built of drift wood as boats were pulled to convenient harbor along the banks. Officers and men took fair turn at the cooking—and the results, if rough and ready, were edible.

Well into the Indian country, the Corps continued in peace. The first villages they sighted were small and unimposing, with tepees of hunter parties, poor, worn and decrepit. In keeping with his President's orders, the Virginian paused often to visit these villages to smoke peace pipes and give

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out medals and American flags, and to plead for peace and good countenance among all men, both red and white. The Indians crowded him with presents of corn and beans.

The explorers passed a deserted Indian village surrounded by tremendous sunflowers interspersed with lavender thistles and wild peas. Meriwether waited in company with Brewster, his black mongrel, and marveled at the offering of lost loveliness. He made note of fertile valleys abounding in a "grass resembling wheat, except that the grain is like rye," also native grasses similar to barley and a "kind of timothy, the seed of which branches from the main stock, and is more like flaxseed than timothy."

The Virginian ordered that the surrounding prairies be set on fire—the customary signal used by traders to tell the Indians of their coming. Presently a party of warriors from the Ottoes, the Missouris, and the Omahas arrived. The Indians, naked except for loin cloths and loose flung blankets of crimson-dyed buffalo hides, accepted with delight extra donations of whiskey and tobacco, and looked wonderstricken at the soldiers' display of firearms.

"They spoke very nearly the same language; they all begged us to give them whiskey," was recorded.

Unmerciful heat that poured down the long throat of the river brought the first death in the Corps. Sgt. Charles Floyd was "taken very bad all at once with a Billiouse Chorlick." Remedies were

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of no avail. Meriwether Lewis was last confidant. He took the dying man's tomahawk and ring and side-arms with due promise that they would be returned to the sergeant's father. Floyd died in the Virginian's arms. The voyagers buried their comrade on top of a high bluff, with the honors due a brave soldier.

That night when camp was made, the captain called a meeting to decide the sergeant's successor. Three privates were nominated, and by common vote, Patrick Gass, Irish and mighty of limb, was elected.

## CHAPTER X

### UP RIVER

**M**ERIWETHER LEWIS reveled in the rich life of the wilderness, and he came to like his own men, to find among them the brotherhood and charity that build great friendships. Before, his life had held too much of reserve and loneliness, but here he was among high-hearted companions, far out in the mightiest of frontiers.

As summer waned the wilderness showed new marvels in nature. Forests held cold running springs and cool valleys. Song birds in thousands frolicked in the river brakes. The captain noted the brown martin, "so gentill that they do not fly until we get within a few feet of them." Indians were friends of the birds. They regarded an assemblage of birds as a message from the gods, and so did them no harm.

At the mouth of the Yankton or James River, the Virginian again ordered the prairies grass fired so that the other Sioux villages might learn of the Corps' arrival. By noon of the following day a first delegation of the Sioux arrived. Captain Lewis received them under a far-spread oak tree, beside which flew the Stars and Stripes. He made a speech which was duly interpreted by Druillard,

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naming the mission as one of charity and friendship, qualities of the great father at Washington.

Meriwether Lewis noted that the first comers, who belonged to the Teton village, were ugly and ill-made, that their legs and arms were too small for their bodies, their cheek bones were high, and their eyes protruded. Their bodies and faces were blackened with a mixture of buffalo grease and surface coal. Over their shoulders they wore loose robes of buffalo skins, bleached white and ornamented with porcupine quills and tiny bones. They wore narrow girdles and from hips to ankles swung loose wrappings of antelope skin adorned with tufts of hair from the scalps of unlucky enemies. Their moccasins were of buffalo skin with the hair inside. The women dressed the same as the men.

They lived in neatly built and well kept tepees—fifteen or twenty feet high—covered over with buffalo hides. Dogs were numerous about the camp, grizzly pack dogs for the most part, but some smaller dogs were kept to be eaten. A scattering of ancient rifles had partially replaced long bows.

At the first village the Virginian noticed two young squaws who quarreled raspingly and presently fell to pulling hair. A powerfully built tribesman hurried toward them, and at his approach onlookers fled. The peace-maker carried over his shoulder a heavy whip. Without ceremony he separated the two women and taking the younger one he stripped off her clothing, threw her face downward on the ground and lashed her without



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mercy. As the first squaw ran screaming to her lodge, he proceeded to administer equal chastisement to the second.

On inquiring wherefores, Lewis found that the flogger was an officer common to all tribes of the Sioux nation, a peacemaker, appointed by the head chief and holding power at the chief's pleasure. The peacemaker's mission was to keep order during the day and to serve as sentry at night. His power was absolute, his person sacred.

Leaving the Sioux-Tetons was not easy. When the Corps boarded boats and shoved off, a clustering of the young warriors seized the anchor chains of the red piroque and demanded *more* presents. Growing belligerent, two of them set arrows to bow strings. Meriwether Lewis ordered his men under arms, and freeing the anchor chains, the journeymen pushed on upstream for a mile, where the flotilla was anchored at a river island and placed under heavy guard for the night. Next day the explorers saw black-tailed deer grazing at the river's edge, and discovered for the first time tracks of the great white bear.

Captain Lewis was especially charmed by his first sight of antelopes. Of all the wild creatures he knew, these were the most timorous and graceful. Theirs were the speed of the wind and the majesty of the hilltops.

Summer was waning. September brought sure tidings of coming winter. The adventurers were coming into the country of the Ricaras tribes, foot-

## UP RIVER

hills of the Black Mountains. Myriad tributaries poured their burdens of mud and sand into the meandering courses of the Missouri. October brought a riot of magic colors. Willow leaves were of light gold. Shore forests took on resplendent cloaks of scarlet and bronze and heavy browns.

Presently the wanderers sighted the largest river island they had yet encountered. The boats had little more than landed at the southernmost shore when a party of Ricaras appeared to welcome the pale-faces. Meriwether Lewis, with Druillard, went to visit the village. Near the center of the island they came upon a settlement which bore good markings both of comfort and permanence. The octagon-shaped wigwams, thirty to forty feet in diameter at the base, were built of tall willow poles, well matted with grass and covered over with tamped sod. The village numbered about five hundred warriors, tall and well-bodied people, "the best looking, most cleanly, most friendly and industrious Indians I saw anywhere on the voyage."

The kindly Ricaras chief presented the visitors with ten bushels of corn and a generous amount of beans and squashes, which were gladly received, for although only half the journey was covered, food stores were lessening. Meriwether Lewis invited the chieftain aboard his boat and presented him with some sugar and salt and a sun-glass.

The Virginian, always with the weather eye of a farmer, studied Indian foods. Among wild edibles

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the river peoples made good use of nuts—black walnuts, hickory nuts, hazel nuts, pecans and sweet acorns. Among wild fruits they profited by mulberries, prickly pears, pawpaws, wild grapes, cherries, currants and blackberries. Plums and apples they sometimes dried for winter use. Wild kale served as boiled greens. Indian corn, differing from present cultivated corn in that its single thin ear matured on the head of the stalk, was the cereal standby. Beans were in common cultivation, bushy-topped bunch beans. Wild rye he found common to many open prairies and even in the less dense forest lands. Wild timothy also grew in abundance, furnishing forage for horses and seed to feed all manner of bird life. The Indians apparently knew nothing of hay cutting. They left horses at open grazing during the whole winter.

Mother Nature served them as pharmacist. A Ricaras warrior brought in a handful of strange seed, which, boiled into tea, produced a strong diuretic. Poultices and sore-throat remedies they devised from roots. Tea made of dwarf cedar served as a purge. The Indians suffered from various eye troubles, which they treated with a tea, made of yellow root, used further as a mouth wash and a dressing for wounds. Wild ginger was the common remedy for stomach complaints. The Ricaras planted tobacco in level-topped hills, thinned out the weaker shoots, cultivated the crop with hoes, and at harvest time cut the stalks, and arranged them into close-headed bundles which they cured

## UP RIVER

over open fires. On testing this Indian tobacco, Meriwether Lewis, who had spent a good many years at tobacco growing, gave sage verdict:

"It does not effect the nerves in the same manner as the tobacco grown in the United States does." He adds, "It is worthy to remark that the Ricaras never use spiritous liquors."

The journey went on through slow and laborious days. Toward mid-October Private John Newman, one of the soldiers, was put under arrest for threatened mutiny. The captain straightway detailed a court martial of nine soldiers to try the case.

The prisoner plead not guilty to the charge exhibited against him. The court after having duly considered the evidence adduced, ruled the prisoner John Newman guilty of the charge exhibited against him, and sentenced him agreeably to the rules and articles of war, to receive seventy-five lashes on this bare back, and to be henceforth disgarded from the permanent party engaged for Northwestern Discovery.

Meriwether Lewis read the verdict and signed the order. He was abruptly changed from the rôle of venturesome philosopher to that of hard disciplinarian. The Corps of Discovery was now more than fifteen hundred miles into the wilderness. Dissension meant common ruin. It was no time for gentle words.

Now that the Corps was nearing the Mandan country, the Virginian decided to bring the first

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

season's voyaging to a close. Minor ailments had become common among his men. The boats were in poor condition—warped and battered by snags and sandbars, the sails torn and patched until they held the general appearance of a farm boy's overalls. Cold winds played from the north.

Meriwether continued his mission as land follower, with the amiable black Brewster close at his heels.

On the nineteenth of October the explorers came into the realm of the Mandans. They passed abandoned villages whose grounds were strewn with bones and human skulls. Indian life bore due seasoning of bitterness. War and pestilence and death were frequent callers along the arms of the great Missouri.

The Mandans were cordial. Warriors, women, and children flocked down the river's bank to look at the strange little fleet. Pleasing people they were, too, outstanding from other nations because of the lightness of their complexion. Their tribe was divided into five villages, each with a first and second chief, all in turn under the rule of a Grand Chief, whose name was Black Cat.

The principal Mandan village was located on a bluff overlooking the Missouri, not far from the present site of Bismarck, N. D. Here the Virginian went in easy friendship, finding the villages clean and inviting, with lodges well built and covered over with paddings of earth. As a first token of friendship he gave the community an iron hand-

## UP RIVER

mill for grinding corn. Two years later a wandering trapper wrote of the gift:

I saw the remains of an excellent large corn mill, which the foolish fellows had demolished to barb their arrows; the largest piece of it, which they could not break or work into any weapon, was fixed to a wooden handle and used to pound marrow bones to make grease.<sup>1</sup>

On the third of November the Corps of Discovery fell to the task of building a winter camp, having chosen a site on the north bank of the river, seven or eight miles below the mouth of Knife River. Timber was plentiful and logs of cottonwood and elm responded readily to the trained axes of the military frontiersmen. Twelve cabins were raised, securely mortared with mud and roofed with short boards split from straight-grained ash. Rock chimneys were built and the huts were heated by open fireplaces.

Thus Fort Mandan came into being. The party's first Christmas in the wilderness was a merry one. Dawn was heralded by a discharge of three volleys of rifle fire and three shots from the one cannon. Then the Stars and Stripes were raised to a tall mast of spruce and an eye-opener of brandy passed to the far-straying Corps. Lewis then directed that extra portionings of dried apples and three rations of brandy be distributed. Singing and dancing filled out most of the day, a festivity entirely womanless.

Christmas was followed by days that were still

<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie, *Masson's Bourg*, Vol. 1, p. 336.

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and bitter cold. Snows came and the river was blockaded with ice. Clark busied himself at drawing a map of the route which they had traversed. The Virginian spent his days at writing letters and at visiting among the Mandans, dressing their wounds, serving as rough-and-ready doctor for their sick, and giving generously of the fast waning store of presents. During other days he walked forth alone, looking out upon the somber world of winter.

The Mandans chose January, the mid-winter moon, for their main festivals, the buffalo and the medicine dances. The buffalo dance, which held sway for three successive nights, served as exhortation that the herds, at that season straying far, should come closer, so that the hunters could replenish their supplies of meat and robes.

The play began with a generous feast, at the end of which the host made due sacrifice by burning some valuable robe or trinket. Then the girls and young women came forth naked and danced, whereupon each in turn would prostrate herself before an onlooker, and so challenge or reward the boldness of any warrior who chose to take advantage.

Meriwether Lewis was charmed generally with Indian ways, but English traders from the Hudson Bay Company, who were continually arriving, marred his pleasure. He was prejudiced against the British. His family had fought them during the Revolution, and for two years he had been suffered to overhear Britain's official and diplomatic

## UP RIVER

insolence at Washington. He disliked all Englishmen and took no pains whatever to disguise his views. Charles McKenzie, an agent of the Hudson Bay Company, records in his diary that while he was treated civilly by both Lewis and Clark, that Lewis "showed an unconquerable aversion to anything which pertained to Britain."



## CHAPTER XI

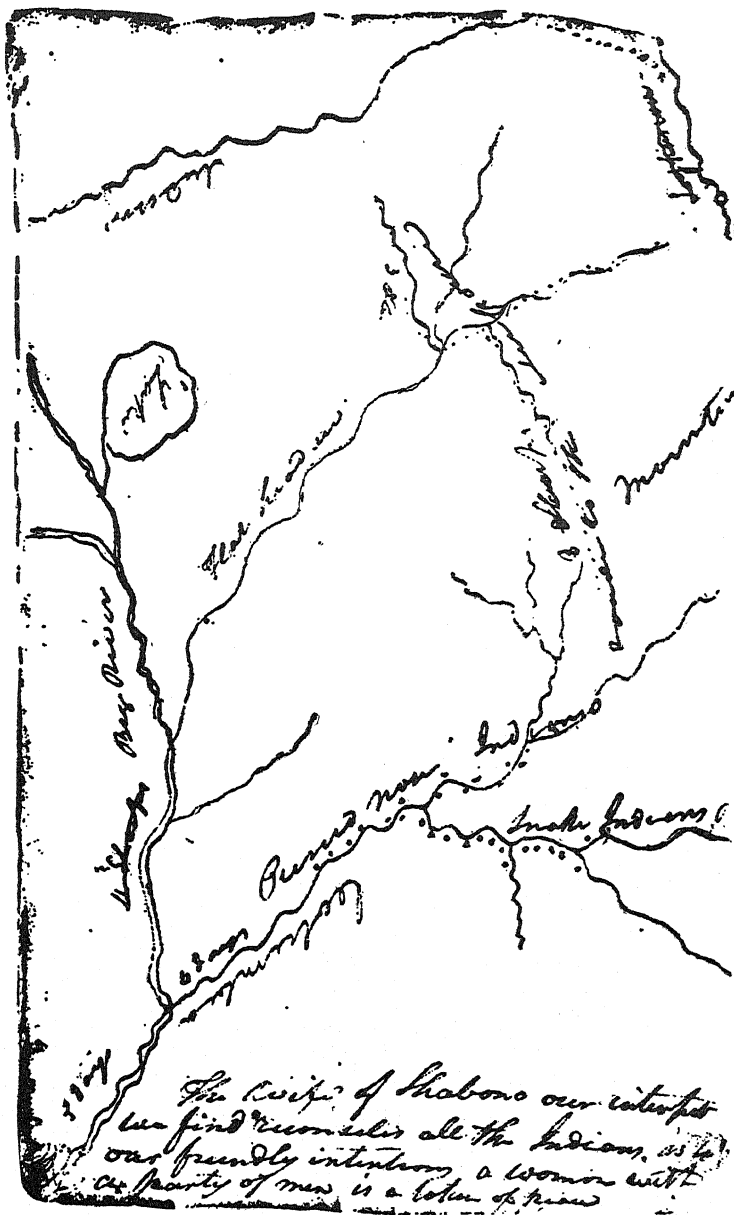
### WINTERING AT MANDAN

**M**ANDAN was the stronghold against a winter long and mercilessly cold. The discoverers spent slow days at hunting, eating and sleeping, and hovering about skimpy fires. Indians were continuous visitors, coming in friendly curiosity, pestering with their company, questioning and pilfering.

After a year more than usually gregarious, Meriwether Lewis found himself again sinking into a still ocean of loneliness. He had become once more a solitary dreamer. Billy Clark, roommate in a communal twelve-by-twelve log hut, hovered before a mud-daubed fireplace drafting maps and charts of the strange world through which they had traveled, entering journal notes, copying and checking endless foolscap sheets of estimates and compass bearings, so tremendously engrossed at his work that he chose to talk about little else.

The troopers were in the mellow mood that comes of a prolonged military holiday. They chopped wood and hunted buffalo, bargained and caroused with the Mandans, pursued affairs with squaws and damsels of the tribe, and slept.

The Virginian kept considerably to himself.



Map from Clark field-book, showing location of Indian tribes on  
 Columbia River

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When snows were not too heavy, he would call to Brewster, take up his rifle, and tramp away through the winter-fast prairies, naming his mission as hunting, but bringing home no game. The stillness and loneliness of the land crowded upon him. It was his all-present and all-powerful companion and he needed no other except his dog and his gun, and a free horizon.

Winter grew increasingly bitter. Meriwether found himself robbed of all chances for solitary wanderings. Even when he put on all the clothes he had and a buffalo robe or two besides, he still couldn't be secure against frostbite; so he retreated to the headquarters tenanted by Clark and took Brewster as the third companion. The choice showed more sentiment than wisdom, for Brewster had become sorely infested with fleas, and spent most of the days and a good part of the nights at whining and scratching and scuffling.

Late winter brought peril of hunger. When hunting stopped, food stores sank fast and the troopers crowded into the other cabins, content to shiver and wait. Corn and beans and frozen buffalo meat had to be bought now from the Indians, who accepted only one medium for barter—metal for making arrow barbs. Lewis directed that the two Field brothers take a sheet-iron boat stove and cut it into bits. Mandans cared more for iron than for gold.

Early March brought beginning thaws, the frozen river showed signs of breaking ice, and the

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discoverers counted days and hours until they could push on. Meriwether began packing a vast box of specimens to be sent back to Washington—skeletons and pelts, a live prairie dog, a prairie hen and four magpies, a figured buffalo robe, Indian bows and arrows, corn and tobacco seed, rock and soil samples, materials destined to be displayed in the halls of Monticello.

That done, he turned his attention to the boats, which had waited for months, fast frozen to their moorings. First the Corps took axes and chopped the boats from the ice; then pulled them ashore, smeared them with resin and applied patches and spikes. Meriwether was delighted at the chance to work. He and Clark labored side by side, trying strength with their redoubtable sergeant, Irish Patrick Gass.

Change in craft was necessary. The captain ordered that the large boat be torn to pieces and its timber used for building a raft needed for a homeward voyage. The Corps had some surplus members, and besides, Mr. Thomas Jefferson's specimen boxes had to be gotten to Mr. Thomas Jefferson.

Lewis put the raft in charge of Corporal Warfington and John Newman, the private who had been flogged so mercilessly for threatened mutiny. The corporal was glad to turn back. Newman asked to carry on, but Meriwether Lewis contended that the return voyage also was important; and asked of the President that he see that the returners also be given fair settlement. The raft was loaded

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and, when the ice flow was passably open, set forth for the return to St. Louis and to Washington town.

With the approach of spring, mighty flocks of ducks and geese made up river; elk, deer and buffalo came out of winter hiding, hunting was easy again, and spirits were higher.

The Captain studied his midget fleet. Both the red and the white rowboats had been put in good condition, each one equipped with eight pairs of new oars, hewn and whittled from cottonwood. The Virginian next bartered from the Mandans six small canoes made of buffalo hides stretched tightly over willow frames. He reviewed the prospects and later wrote:

"This little fleet altho not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Captain Cook, was still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever beheld theirs, and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation. I could not but esteem this moment of departure as among the most happy of my life."

Adventure waited—high and wide. The Corps was facing two thousand miles of mountains and rivers and plateaus, a land over which white men never before had traveled.

Looking over his crew and cargo, the Virginian reflected:

"We were now about to penetrate a country on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden;

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the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine."

The party had but thirty-three members now, all duly tried and tested: Besides Lewis and Clark, the roster included the three sergeants, Ordway, Pryor, and Gass; twenty-three privates, Bratton, Colter, Reuben and Joseph Fields, Shields, Gibson, Shannon, Potts, Collins, Whitehouse, Winsor, Hall, Goodrich, Frazier, Le Page, Labuche, McNeal, Warner, Howard, Wiser, and Thompson; George Druillard, a trooper with previous dealings with Indians, Charbonneau, the Bird Woman, York, and Brewster.

Early February brought an increase in personnel. True to promise, Charbonneau, half-breed waterman, had stayed with the Corps, and had given oath that he would keep with them on to the Pacific; but Charbonneau's squaw, the Bird Woman, produced a surprise in the form of a son, who in keeping with agreement, also belonged with the Corps of Discovery. Meriwether Lewis puffed at his pipe and mumbled a private treatise on damnation; but William Clark, truly interested, recorded:

"It is worthy of remark that this was the first child which this woman had boarn, and as is common in such cases her labor was tedious and the pain violent. Having the rattles of a snake by me I administered two rings of it broken into small pieces to the woman, and added a small quantity of water. Whether this medicine was truly the cause or not I shall not undertake to determine, but I was

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informed that she had not taken it more than ten minutes before the child was born."

Ten months had passed since the Corps had lifted anchor and shoved off up river from the village of St. Charles; months that were passively magnificent but lacking in great adventure. Now with the second embarking at hand, Captain Lewis realized with something of a start that he was but barely acquainted with most of his crew. Until now, Clark had been executive and main leader, and head oarsman. Lewis had merely followed the river banks and looked and learned of the wonderland that lay along the great Missouri. Now, with the second embarking at hand, with the really hard and dangerous share of the journey to be met, Meriwether resolved to study his men. Play was over. The time had come for real work. The Virginian viewed his crew:

The three sergeants, Ordway, Pryor, and Gass, were splendid bets. Ordway and Pryor were lanky, loose-jointed frontiersmen from Kentucky—lean, hard-muscled, and keen of eye and trigger-finger. Gass, the powerful Irishman, also from the Kentucky mountains, was a gray-haired giant at his half-century, gnarled and hardened by heavy labor as a farmer, river-boat hand, and soldier. He spoke with a Dublin brogue, swore mightily, laughed uproariously, and favored with an almost continuous sluice of advice, most of it good. The oldest head in the force, his also was among the keenest and most useful.

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Reuben and Joseph Fields, brothers in their early twenties, likewise were from Kentucky, were blacksmiths by trade, and had taken a term at the Army mainly for sport. Private Shields, also a blacksmith, was a wiry little Welshman who waxed fine with hard work and whiskey. Druillard was among the strangest of the lot—gawky and raw-boned, half-blind, half-French, and half God-knows-what, a barge paddler and a river-front lounge, a part-time trapper and deer poacher who had appeared at the first camp on River Dubois and begged for a job so stubbornly that he got one. Strangely enough he had proved a valuable hand, for even though half-blind, he had an almost intuitive knowledge of river ways and a genius for shoving a boat through shallows and snags and rapids that a more rational member would never attempt. Le Page and Labuche both were half-French watermen, both from nowhere, and gave no promise of another goal.

Of Privates Hall, Goodrich, Winsor, and Warner we know little except that they were Army recruits from the Ohio Territory and that they all were under twenty-one. Privates Howard, Thompson and Wiser were of the First United States Infantry, soldiers by enlistment, pay, and habits, passably hard-working and generally inconspicuous. Bratton was an awkward, elephantine youth, with an uncontrollable fondness for Indian squaws and whiskey, a flare for song, and a talent for picking the banjo. Gibson, Shannon, Collins, and White-



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house were recruits from the far outpost at Kaskaskia, youngsters not yet twenty-one who apparently had taken to soldiering to escape the drudgeries of river-bottom farming. Private Potts, a fat little Dutchman from Pennsylvania, was self-nominated jester of the expedition. He stuttered on s's and t's, spoke with a strong accent, was light-footed at jigging and capers, and knew innumerable merry, sometimes obscene, verses which he recited to the common delight of all. Potts signed his name with an X and gave his age as forty-one. Three years later at the time of his discharge, he was still forty-one.

John Colter was youngest of the crew, and one of the gayest and bravest. A Pennsylvanian, he enlisted at sixteen, and at barely nineteen set forth alone to make the first discovery of the present site of Yellowstone National Park. Clark formed an immediate liking for the youth and Lewis spoke of him with a real affection.

Then, finally, there was York, who also showed sure signs of becoming clown of the expedition. York was as black as a hat, well over six feet tall, bullet-headed, ivory-toothed, and as strong as a gorilla. The fact that he was double-jointed at knees and ankles helped mightily with his prowess at jigging and pigeon-wing cutting. In the beginning of the voyage, the Negro had remained as inconspicuous as a dusky shadow, tugging at oars or pushpoles with all the power of his bull muscles; but winter among the Mandans had touched him

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with a pronounced change. Mandan maidens had heaped him with attentions and languishing sighs and the loitering soldiery had shown interest and admiration for his prowess at dancing; so all in all, York was a changed man.

These were the men who would name the fate of the great adventure. Meriwether Lewis studied them with reassurance. The last trace of military swagger was gone from the group, along with military uniforms. Now the men were long-bearded, bushy haired, and garbed in corduroy, buckskin, and trappings bartered from the Mandans. They were sons of a new wilderness and they looked the part.

## CHAPTER XII

### ON TO THE YELLOWSTONE

**T**HE Corps moved on.

Handmade oars flashed in early spring sunlight. Weather-bronzed men, own sons of a great pioneering race, were fighting, cursing, laughing a way through the magnificent wilderness of the West.

William Clark commanded the midget fleet. Meriwether Lewis continued to walk ashore, his far-seeing eyes set always to the westward, his long-barreled rifle swung easily over his shoulder, Brewster trailing joyously at his heels or frolicking through the brambled forests pursuing unseen trails. Sometimes the black mongrel overdid it, for during this stage of the journey the Virginian repeatedly lost his dog and worried greatly; but invariably day-break would find Brewster back at his master's side, ready for another day of exploration.

The Bird Woman, Charbonneau's dusky spouse, and her papoose, were added to the baggage of the red rowboat.

Late in April the Corps reached the mouth of the Yellowstone. Here tall trees and blufftops held nests of bald eagles, magpies, and wild geese. Tim-



*Brown Brothers*

**"THE BIRD WOMAN"—BY ALICE COOPER**

(This monument, in a park at Portland, Oregon, commemorates the Shoshone girl who guided the Lewis and Clark Expedition over the Rocky Mountains)



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ber wolves prowled and killed, and scavenger coyotes attended the scraps left by the wolves.

Now they were also in the land of the grizzly bear, most feared of all challengers. One morning Meriwether Lewis shot a fat buffalo and, without reloading his rifle, paused to wait until the quarry died. Turning he saw a lumbering grizzly not twenty paces from him. It was a tight place. The river bank, about eighty yards away, sloped down to a height of no more than three feet above the water. Brewster fled in pellmell retreat.

The Virginian began to saunter slowly, but the grizzly snarled and charged, whereupon his antagonist tossed away his musket, and ran for the river, and plunged into the water. The bear stopped at the river's bank and turned back to the fallen buffalo to make a feast. The Corps laughed heartily and long when the story was told, but the Captain ordered that no man was to leave camp alone, and the orders were duly fulfilled.

"The succession of curious adventures," wrote Lewis, "wore the impression on my mind of enchantment, and sometimes for a moment I thought it might be a dream."

Clark dealt with the tangible realities, observing: "One trio of pests still invade and obstruct us on all occasions; these are the mosquitoes, eye knats and prickly pears, equal to any three curses that ever pour Egypt laiboured under except the Mahometant yoke."

Nights were chill and sparkling with frost, but

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the days brought languid warmth and brave young grass, choruses of bird song and nodding drowsiness. The river was swifter and clearer and the average day's progress fell to nine miles—then to seven.

Camp routine was little changed. Journeying began soon after daylight and lasted until dark. Horses had been abandoned at the wayside. Meriwether Lewis and his dog, Brewster, were afoot along the bank, the Virginian collecting specimens of leaves and grass. Brewster dealing exercise to listless and vagrant jackrabbits. William Clark continued as chief of navigation.

Hunting was easy. The fare was entirely of meat—elk and otter with an occasional young buffalo. The Fields boys followed the banks to hunt and sometimes oarsmen killed otters from midstream. Charbonneau rebelled at being assigned to the red rowboat that carried his squaw and baby, so Clark gave him the worst of the leather canoes and let him push forward as scout. Druillard, half-blind waterman, produced a fiddle, long kept secret, and was straightway appointed head musician. York relished the chance to dance to fiddle music and Private Potts devised reels of inelegant verse.

At noontime the boats drew to shore; fires were kindled and meat cooked in three battered kettles, and being cooked was cut in chunks, passed out, and eaten by hand. Each day six men were given culinary labors in addition to travel toil, and none

## ON TO THE YELLOWSTONE

was exempt from his share of cooking, not even Lewis and Clark.

Night camps were made under open stars.

Travel waxed harder. Sandbars and snags still bothered. Oars were inadequate for the swift currents and were traded for pushpoles which stood for racking and man-killing labor. Clark toiled unceasingly, first and last at the day's work. Meriwether Lewis gave up his solitary wanderings ashore, stowed Brewster with the baggage, and turned navigator, having learned by now "to push a tolerable good pole."

The Bird Woman's baby became another problem. The Corps' youngest member, ten weeks old, squawled dismally at night and the brave spirits who were out to conquer a continent quailed before a wailing infant.

Sleeping was hard for still other reasons. Blanket supplies had diminished with the melting snows; some had been traded to the Indians, others lost, still others thrown away to save luggage burden, and the slim outlay of tenting canvas had suffered much the same sort of destruction; so Meriwether Lewis directed that all the Corps should sleep in the open; that each man should have one buffalo robe to use as a sleeping bag.

The weather took a turn for the worse. On the far Missouri, May brought cold winds and frosts. Baffling clouds of fog poured into the valleys. Sore eyes and rheumatism increased. Fiddle music and song abated. Even York ceased to caper. It was



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hard plodding. One day Druillard shot a beaver from his boat. Brewster swam out to bring in the quarry and suffered a leg bite so serious that Meriwether spent the rest of the day and the following night at doctoring his dog.

Then the Corps passed the confluence of the Musselshell, "a handsome and bold river which discharged itself into the Missouri on the larboard side," twenty-two hundred miles above the port of St. Louis.

The river led on through broken foothills of the Black Mountains. Game grew scarce. Beavers thinned with the timber, and buffaloes were moving toward easterly prairies. The river grew deeper, and swifter. The Corps gave up Sundays and holidays and rowed from dawn until dark.

On the twenty-sixth of May, Lewis caught his first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains:

In the afterpart of the day I walked out and on arriving at the summit of one of the highest points in the neighborhood I thought myself well repaid for my labour; as from this point I beheld the Rocky Mountains for the first time. I could only discern a few of the most elevated points above the horizon. . . . While I viewed these mountains I felt a secret pleasure in finding myself so near the head of the heretofore conceived boundless Missouri; but when I reflected upon the difficulties which this snowy barrier would most probably throw in my way to the Pacific; and the sufferings and hardships of myself and party in them, it in some measure counterbalanced the joy I had felt . . . but I have always held it a crime to anticipate evils. I will believe

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it a good comfortable road until I am compelled to believe differently.

Lewis, still staying with the boats, reported on the hunting ways of the river Indians:

Today we passed the remains of a vast many mangled carcasses of Buffalow which had been driven over a precipice of 150 feet by the Indians and perished. . . .

In this manner the Indians of the Missouri destroy vast herds of buffalow at a strike: for this purpose one of the most active and fleet young men is selected and disguised in a robe of buffalow skin, having also the skin of a buffaloes head with the years and horns fastened on his head in the form of a cape. Thus caparisoned he places himself at a convenient distance between a herd of buffaloes and a precipice proper for the purpose, which happens at many places on the river for miles together. The other Indians now surround the herd on the back and flanks and at a signal agreed on all show themselves at the same time moving forward toward the buffaloe: the disguised Indian or decoy has taken care to place himself sufficiently nigh the buffalow to be noticed by them when they take to flight and running before them they follow him in full speed to the precipice, the cattle behind driving those in front over and seeing them go down do not look or hesitate about following until the whole mass are precipitated down the precipice forming one common mass of dead and mangled carcasses. . . .

The decoy in the meantime has taken care to secure himself in some cranney or crevice of the clift which he has previously prepared for that purpose. The part of the decoy is extremely dangerous.

The beginning of June found the wild roses in blossom. Voyaging took a turn for the better. The

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Virginian turned hunter again and with Druillard began collecting a supply of elk hide with which to build new canoes. Portages were close at hand, and portages called for lighter boats. The heavy row-boats must needs be scrapped.

On the third of June the Corps of Discovery came to the joining of two rivers. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark strolled out and looked upon the countryside from a high hilltop.

. . . from which we had an extensive and most enchanting view; the country in every direction around us was one vast plain in which innumerable herds of Buffaloes were seen attended by their shepherds, the wolves; the solitary antelope which now had their young; were distributed over its face; some herds of elk were also seen: the verdure perfectly clothed the ground, the weather was pleasant and clear.

Not all the party was able to venture forth. Moccasins were worn away, clothing was in tatters. Half-bare feet were bruised and mangled with the wrath of sharp rocks. Most of the Corps spent the day at dressing skins with which to make new clothes, and at mending.

After one day of rest new adventure began. A coin flip decided that Meriwether Lewis would explore the righthand fork of the river, and William Clark the left. Each took six men. The Virginian led his party by land, so that he could better see the lay of the mountains. He came back with a lyrical report of bird life:

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. . . birds are now setting and laying their eggs in the plain: their little nests are to be seen in great abundance as we pass. there are myriads of small grasshoppers which no doubt furnish the principal food for the numerous progeny of the feathered creation . . . when the sun began to shine these birds appeared to be very gay, and sang most enchantingly. I observed among them the brown robin, turtle dove, linnet, goald-finch, the large and small blackbird, wren and several other birds of less note.

Before the first day of exploring was finished, Lewis and his men were convinced that the right-hand course was not the main body of the Missouri, and so he named it Maria River, in honor of Maria Wood, the damsel who had been, at least theoretically, his first love.

The Virginian rewhittled his pencil and wrote:

It is true that the hue of the waters of this turbulent and troubled stream but illy compare with the pure celestial virtues and amiable qualifications of that lovely fair one; but on the other hand it is a noble river; one destined to become in my opinion an object of contention between the two great powers of America and Great Britain with respect to the adjustment of the Northwesterly boundary of the former.

Those sentiments expressed, the Captain turned his attention to hard economy. He decided to cache the red pirogue and sent a dozen hunters to kill buffalo and make ready a supply of meat for the lean journey that was to come. These were hard times, and from the look of things, worse were coming.

[illegible]

Great Rapids of the Columbia River, sketch-map by Clark

## ON TO THE YELLOWSTONE

On the first day of summer, the Corps began a portage around the Great Falls. The original outlay of supplies included a set of oaken wheels, and with these they built a rude wagon, upon which they loaded the one remaining rowboat. Baggage was divided into back packs, and the rest loaded on the wagon. The Corps took due turn at dragging the cumbersome truck. Long days wore on, the sun beating down with ruthless intensity. Acres of prickly pear and cactus cut shoes and moccasins to shreds. Meriwether Lewis gave encouragement and toted his full share of the load. Everyone worked. Even the Bird Woman carried her baby and a good hundred pounds of luggage besides. . . .

The portage was gruelling. Sunlight glared upon a lost world of white sand and sheer rock, and killing heat followed a waterless trail. During the first day of tramping, Brewster led the marchers to a brackish pool of water, but the night brought both thirst and hunger; for there was no wood to cook meat, and no vestige of springs. Next day was bitter hard:

They are obliged to halt and rest frequently . . . at every halt these poor fellows tumble down and are so much fatigued that many of them are asleep in an instant . . . some are limping under the soariness of their feet. others faint and are unable to stand . . . yet no one complains, all go with cheerfulness.

Lewis forgot the toils of tramping when the Corps again came into the valley of a lost rivulet. Wild rye, growing to a height of eighteen or twenty

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inches, crowded the adjoining flat lands, wild mint grew along the water's edge. Myriads of young blackbirds were learning to fly. Turtles splashed about the water's edge, but fishing proved of no avail.

Men drank the precious water. Brewster lapped at a still pool for half an hour, then collapsed at his master's feet.

Next day the journey continued upon a level expanse of white sand. Wind rose and William Clark and the dusky York rigged out a sail of patched canvas, which they mounted upon the portage truck and so lightened the toil of dragging it. . . .

That day brought the portage to an end. When darkness came the wanderers fell to earth and slept, without bothering to make supper. Next day the marchers slept and Meriwether Lewis appointed himself cook for the day, barbecued half a buffalo carcass, and by way of special treat, made each man a suet dumpling out of buffalo suet, sugar and flour. He gave the Bird Woman an extra helping. Then he put his men to burying a final cache—every article not essential to carrying on the expedition, his own books and charts, all surplus pelts and specimens and trinkets and personal belongings. . . .

When that was done, he cooked supper for his crew, and when that had been consumed, he suggested a dance. The Bird Woman and her papoose discreetly withdrew. Druillard brought out his fiddle and began. York jigged and capered, and as William Clark put it "carried on turribel." Pri-

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vate Potts favored them with a jig and a song, and presently the rest of the Corps, forgetful of aching backs and voracious mosquitoes, joined in the frolic, sang and square-danced half the night. Brewster barked and looked on with glistening eye and wagging tail, but Meriwether Lewis stood apart, looking into the steel blue sky and into the wondrous mountain night.

Next day the two leaders discussed the situation. Thus far they had not met with the Snake Indians, and so had no way of estimating the friendliness or hostility of that far Western tribe. In his diary of July 4, the Virginian wrote:

We all believe that we are about to enter upon the most perilous and difficult part of our voyage . . . yet all appear ready to meet the difficulties which await us with fortitude and becoming resolution.

When night time came, the Captain directed that Independence Day be duly celebrated with dumpplings and buffalo meat, and gave to each man a good dram of whiskey—the very last of the stock. Then Druillard played his fiddle and the Corps danced. “In short we had no cause to covet the sumptus feasts of our countrymen on that day.”

Next day the Virginian tried his hand at building a canoe out of elk hide, but no sooner had the craft touched water than she showed full of leaks. William Clark had another idea. He proposed to go out and locate cottonwood trees big enough to be hollowed into log canoes. So he picked five men



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and went into the bottom lands to search for giant cottonwoods.

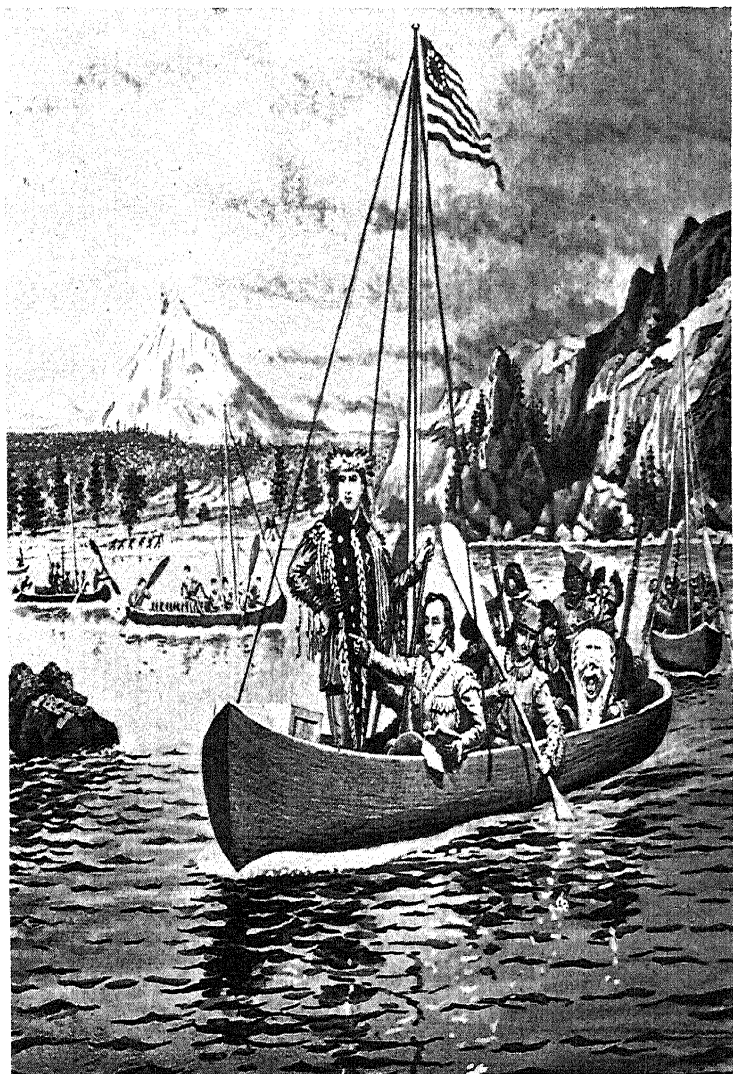
The party was now put on the benevolence of Dame Nature. When rain fell the voyagers had it to endure. Uniforms were outworn. Clark still wore a ragged artillerist's outfit, but all the others had lapsed into hand-sewn buckskin. Hair went uncut and uncombed. Beards were long and burry.

Meriwether Lewis was anxious to push on. Summer was passing. The Corps would have to get over the mountains before winter came. During the week that followed, he amused himself at fishing, "having nothing to do save wait for the return of the canoes." Then the adventurers headed up stream to where Clark and his band were shaping the new boats.

Five small canoes remained usable. Clark and his ax men had chopped out two more, both of fat cottonwood logs, one twenty-five feet long, the other thirty-three. Oars and seats were quickly shaped, and at dawn of the fifteenth of July the wanderers pushed on past the Great Falls, loaded to the full with passengers and stores of dried meat and tallow.

River bottom lands were crowded with wild sunflowers.

The Indians of the Missouri, particularly those who do not cultivate maize, make great use of the seed of the sunflower for bread or use it in thickening their soup. To this they sometimes add a portion of water and drink it in that state, or add a sufficient quantity of



*Brown Brothers*

THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION  
(From an old Print)



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marrow grease to reduce it to the consistency of common dough and eat it in that manner.

One morning the party passed a broad grassland which had lately been ravaged by fire. This was a sure sign of Indians. Fires gave warning of the approach of strangers. The river, increasingly swift, led on through paralleling ranges of snow-capped mountains. Trout shot through the clear water like living arrows. Wild geese were abundant, and Brewster brought in dozens of goslings, which although nearly grown had not yet grown enough wing feathers to fly. River bends were crowded with wild roses.

The Bird Woman, who had stayed quiet so long, now told the Virginian that they were coming into the country of the Snake tribe, that the three forks of the Missouri were close at hand.

Rapids continued and numerous beaver dams further impeded travel. Bright-colored water snakes played at the river banks. Now the river was closely hemmed with high bluffs of blue sandstone, bluffs upon which snow-white mountain goats capered.

The Virginian halted his party and, going alone, climbed to the top of a mighty limestone bluff, where he could see well the three forks of the Missouri.

Later Lewis wrote:

"We begin to feel considerable anxiety with respect to the Snake Indians. if we do not find them or some other nation who have horses I fear the

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successful issue of our voyage will be very doubtful"; but he added, "if any Indians can subsist in the form of a nation in these mountains with the means they have of acquiring food, we can also subsist."

## CHAPTER XIII

### ON TO THE COLUMBIA

NOW that the Missouri had become three rivers in place of one, new names were in order. The Virginian named the southwesterly fork, the one which he planned to follow, Jefferson River, "in honor of that illustrious personage Thomas Jefferson"; the middle fork he named for James Madison, the southeasterly fork for Albert Gallatin.

The Bird Woman told him more of the country, saying that it was on this very camp site that the Snake Indians were resting at the time the Minnetares of the Knife River country first came against them—five years before. The Snake people retreated and hid themselves among the cottonwoods; but the Minnetares pursued and attacked them, killed four men, four women and a number of young boys, and captured a group of women and young boys to hold as hostages. The Bird Woman was one of those captured. Later she had been sold to the Mandans, and in turn bought by Charbonneau. Meriwether Lewis listened and pondered upon the vagaries of womankind:

"I cannot discover that she shews any immotion of sorrow in recollecting this event, or of joy in be-

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ing again restored to her native country; if she had enough to eat & a few trinkets to wear, I believe she would be perfectly content anywhere," he wrote laconically.

The Corps repacked canoes and pressed forward up the Jefferson River. Charbonneau, the Bird Woman, and the Virginian plodded along up the banks, making painstaking detours through flood plains lined by beaver dams. Finding land travel hardest, the rest went back to the boats, leaving the captain alone with Brewster.

Before one day at the Yellowstone was finished Sergeant Gass was out of action with a sprained back; Charbonneau had a sprained ankle, Sergeant Pryor a dislocated shoulder and three more were out of action with boils and stone bruises.

Lewis, therefore, called another halt and taking his dog roamed through scorching hot valleys to reconnoiter. In the course of this trip he was stricken with dysentery, and so spent two days of intense misery, alone except for Brewster.

Game was scarce and shy. Meriwether was certain that if winter should overtake his band in the mountains, so, too, would death.

By now the water had grown so swift and shallow that the voyagers were forced to wade waist deep in the cold torrent, pulling the boats after them. Sharp rocks in the river channels cut the wayfarer's sandals to shreds and left feet bruised and bleeding. Rattlesnakes were about in deathly plenty. Black vultures flapped high among desolate crags. Each

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day left the commander grimmer and more taciturn; thinner and darker of complexion. The gods of lost empires were in a mischievous mood; but delay meant sure death, and there could be no turning back. Lewis noted in his journal:

As it is now all important with us to meet those people [the Snake Indians] as soon as possible, I determined to proceed tomorrow with a small party until I find the Indians: in short it was my resolution to find them or some others who have horses if it should cause me a trip of one month. for without horses we shall be obliged to leave a great part of our stores, of which it appears to me that we have a stock somewhat small for the length of the voyage before us.

This horse-buying was also a hard and dangerous mission, one likely to decide the success or failure of the whole adventure. Taking Druillard, Shields, and McNeal with him, the Virginian swung packs and set forth to the mountains, leaving his good dog Brewster with William Clark. After a day's tramping the wanderers came upon a first Indian trail. Next day the Virginian sighted a lone Indian on horseback, the first Red Man he had seen in all the Far West.

With my glass I discovered from his dress that he was of a different nation from any that we had yet seen. in his arms were a bow and a quiver of arrows, he was mounted without saddle, and a small string attached to the under jaw of his horse served as bridle.

Lewis advanced toward the rider, then unloosened the blanket from his pack and made the ac-



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cepted signal of friendship, "which is by holding the mantle or robe in your hand at two corners, then throwing it in the air high above the head, then bringing it to earth in the act of spreading it three times."

The Indian waited steadfast until the Virginian had come within two hundred paces, then turning his horse about, began to move slowly away. At that the Virginian shouted *tab-ba-bone!* which in Shoshone tongue means *white man*—an apt introduction for one so weather-burned that he might well have been mistaken for an Indian—but the rider vanished.

The searchers made camp for the night and when dawn came they continued. Before an hour had passed they came upon a row of tepees, built of willow brush and newly vacated. Beyond they located another Indian trail, this one deeply beaten, as if from great age, a trail which led "to the most distant fountain of the mighty Missouri in search of which we had spent so many toilsome days and restless nights. thus far I had accomplished one of those great objects on which my mind had been unalterably fixed these many years. Judge then of the pleasure I felt in allaying my thirst with this pure and ice-cold water which issues from the base of a low mountain . . . here I halted a few minutes and rested myself."

Lewis had fair enough reason for resting. He was the first American ever to follow the Missouri to its source, and he had come at last to the great

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Continental Divide. To the westward he saw an infinity of mighty mountains, snow-capped and dim blue in summer sunlight.

Next day the three adventurers saw in the distance a group of Indians, a man, two women, a little child, and a dog. The Virginian once more made the blanket signal of peace. The dog, less shy than his owners, came forward with wagging tail, but the warrior vanished.

The Virginian took out a slender bag of gifts and cautioning his men to wait where they were, hurried on alone until he came within speaking distance of them. The younger woman vanished into the underbrush, but the old woman and the child waited. Meriwether Lewis laid his rifle on the ground, and holding out a handful of bright beads, advanced to join them. The two knelt, quaking with terror.

He took the old woman's hand, repeated *tab-ba-bone* and pushed up his shirt sleeve to show the whiteness of his skin. Then he gave her beads and red paint and a pewter looking-glass. At that the warrior and the young woman reappeared from the brush.

The Virginian painted each one of their cheeks with vermilion powder, a color emblematic of peace, and speaking by signs told them that he came as a friend and craved council with the warriors and chiefs. Then he called to his men, and with the Indians followed the trail which led to their village.

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A roar of hoofs sounded from down the valley before them and a band of mounted warriors came galloping at full speed. Lewis stepped forward, holding high his gift bag; presently, one warrior whose dress and bearing marked him as a chief, came forward. "He embraced me very affectionately in their way, which is by putting your left arm over your right shoulder and clasping your back and applying their left cheek to your right and frequently vociferate the word *ah-hi-e* that is, *I am much rejoiced* . . . all parties now advanced and we were all caressed and besmeared with their grease and paint till I was heartily tired of the national hug."

Meriwether Lewis gave away more beads and vermillion and still speaking by signs, retold the warriors that he came in friendship. The chief motioned that all rise and mount, and offering the white men the use of three horses set forth at the head of the column, leading the way to the village of tepees.

The chief brought each a cake of dried berries, and after they had finished the appetizer a warrior brought an added dole of boiled antelope, and a piece of sun-dried salmon. "This was the first salmon I had seen and it thoroughly convinced me that we were on the waters of the Pacific Ocean."

The Indians then danced until midnight, and the Virginian left his men with the aboriginal hosts and so strolled off to bed. The next morning was one

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spent in hunting. Lewis smiled for the first time in a goodly number of weeks. He records:

I was very much entertained with a view of this Indian chase: it was after a herd of about 10 antelope with 20 hunters. it lasted about two hours and a considerable part of the chase was in view of my tent. About noon the hunters returned—had not killed a single antelope and their horses foaming with sweat.

The Virginian studied the Shoshone's horses with wistful eye. There were at least four hundred of them, all splendid mounts of the sort to make a figure even "on the south side of the James river," and Meriwether noticed that the horses bore telltale brands:

"I saw several Spanish brands on them and some mules which they informed me they had also obtained from the Spaniards. I also saw a bridle bit of Spanish manufacture and sundry other articles which I have no doubt came from the same source," he states.

Still speaking by signs, Meriwether Lewis told the chief, that he wanted to go to the fork of the river and meet comrades who were coming up the stream in boats, and for that he wished the loan of thirty horses to help carry their burdens and later he would buy the horses.

Chief Cameahwait hesitated. Remembering the nearness of heart to stomach, the Virginian went to mixing a pudding with dried berries and a handful of sugar. He passed a serving to the chief, who

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declared it the most delicious morsel he had ever tasted.

Surmising that the Indians suspected this proposed trip to the river's edge as being a trick to entrap them, Meriwether Lewis appealed to the Chieftain's valor. That was winning psychology. Cameahwait and all his warriors went, with their squaws for good measure.

When the party came to the river, the Corps had not yet arrived. That was a sorry turn of luck. The Shoshones once again became suspicious. Troublesome hours of waiting followed; then a warrior scout rode up with the news that the white men were coming. The report brought wild cheers from everyone. The chief repeated the fraternal hug and within half an hour the toil-battered canoes pushed into sight. Recognizing his master, Brewster barked uproariously, plunged into the river, swam to shore, and capered at the Virginian's feet.

Clark was next to land and with him came Charbonneau and the Bird Woman. Seeing her, the chief shouted in delight and, rushing forward, lifted the woman in his arms. The Bird Woman thus was brought back among her own people after an absence of five long years. Chief Cameahwait was own brother to her. The two embraced again and again and wept. York splashed ashore and sensing an attentive audience danced and cavorted. The soldiers clapped and cheered.

The Virginian hurried to unpack a last box of gifts. To Cameahwait, the first chief, he gave his

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uniform coat, a pair of scarlet leggings and a carrot of tobacco; to the warriors, handkerchiefs or knives or beads or looking-glasses. "Every article about us appeared to excite astonishment in their minds—the appearance of the men; their arms, the canoes, the black man, York, the sagacity of my dog were equally objects of admiration," comments the explorer.

The next day was Meriwether Lewis's thirty-first birthday. The day found him heavy with philosophical dissatisfaction, soliloquizing:

"This day I completed my thirty-first year, and conceived that I had in all human probability now existed about half the period which I am to remain in this Sublunary world, I reflected that I had as yet done but little very little indeed, to further the happiness of the human race, or to advance the information of the succeeding generation . . .

"I viewed with regret the many hours I have spent in indolence and now so arly feel the want of that information which those hours would have given me had they been judiciously expended. but since they are past and cannot be recalled, I dash from me the gloomy thought, and resolve in future to redouble my exertions and at least endeavor to promote those two primary aims of human existence, by giving them the aid of that portion of talents which nature and fortune have bestowed upon me; or in future to live for *mankind* and not as I have heretofore lived for *myself*."

Next morning the assemblage returned to the In-

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dian village. Desperately poor in all belongings save horses, the Shoshones were a gay and care-free people, much given to dancing and boasting of heroic moods in battle. Each family head was sole owner of his wives and daughters and entitled to deal with them as he saw fit, but "Their women appear to be held more sacred than in any nation we have seen," says Lewis.

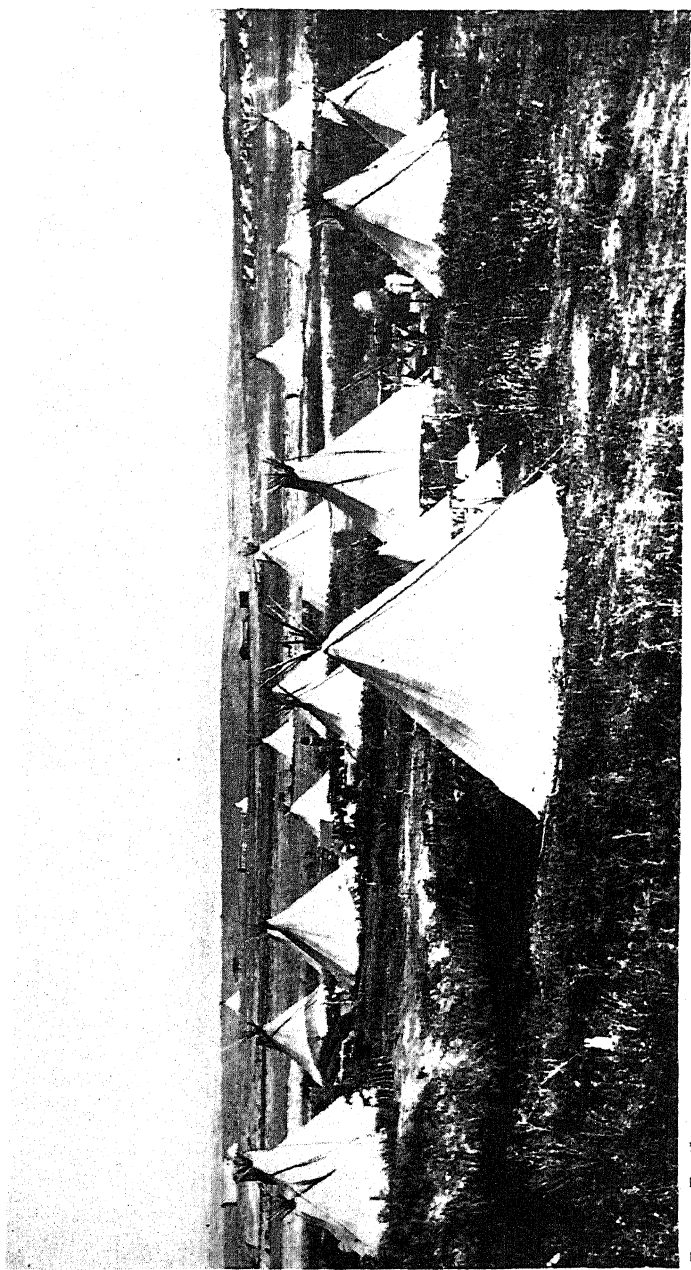
The men wore robes of buffalo skins, shirts, hip-length leggings and moccasins. The women wore elk-skin chemises, leather leggings and moccasins, the latter ornamented with seashells or with blue or white beads. Arm bands of iron or brass, bracelets of platted grass and leather collars adorned with snake cones, were among the more common ornaments. Their bodies were un mutilated, either by cutting or burning. A few boasted leather shields and stone hatchets with wooden handles. In the summer the tribe stayed along the waters of the Columbia; in the winter they followed the buffalo herds into the upper reaches of the Missouri.

The Captain observed further :

"The Indians behave extremely well; the women have been busily engaged all day mending the moccasins of our party."

With the Bird Woman as interpreter, he learned what the Shoshones knew of the Pacific.

"The chief informs me that he has understood from the Indians who inhabit this river below the Rocky Mountains (the Columbia) that it ran a great ways toward the setting sun and lost itself in a



*Brown Brothers*

A SHOSHONE VILLAGE





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great lake of water that was illy tasted, and where the white men lived."

Cameahwait told, too, of mighty mountains that waited to be climbed, of broad lands inhabited by fierce Indians, land destitute of both game and water; but the Virginian gave no great weight to the warning. He was westward bound.

"Me and my men go forward," he stated resolutely.

Five days were given over to horse trading and when the trading tour was done twenty-three horses and a pack mule had been bartered for, at an average price of six dollars a head, paid in ornaments, boots, and sabres, coats, knives, and blankets. Navigators were now turned cavalry. Remaining baggage was redistributed for saddle packs, and the canoes were pulled ashore and abandoned.

Meriwether Lewis feasted on fish and berries with grim uneasiness for the days soon to come. Deer, buffalo, and antelope were nowhere to be seen. Even squirrel and pheasant were scarce and the mountains before them were awe-inspiring.

"The sides of these mountains present generally one barren surface of confused and broken masses of stone . . . so hard that when struck with steel yeald fire like flint."

The Virginian studied the prospects closely. Here was the acid test—here he was responsible for the lives of his men. A weazened old Shoshone, eyes dim with harvests of years, agreed to go with the party as guide. No other one of the tribe dared.

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So the Corps of Discovery once more headed westward, all well mounted and high of hope. The very first day a horse was mortally hurt, Private Bill Bratton turned desperately sick, and Captain Lewis walked so that the ailing man could use his mount. Horses were pack-carriers. Men rode when and if luggage allowed. The Bird Woman insisted on walking, her papoose swung across her shoulders. Brewster led the cavalcade.

The Corps fought on, sternly and without talk. The trail grew rougher, drizzling rain adding to its dangers. On the third of September snow began to fall.

Next day the wanderers came upon a party of the Tushipaw Nation, friendly, white-robed Indians, who shared generously their sole fare of dried berries. Meriwether Lewis marveled that human beings could live on so very little.

Beyond the Lolo forks of the Bitter Root River storms swept down upon the wanderers, rain mixed with hail. Higher up the trail led through heavy bankings of snow. Horses were continually stumbling. The Corps followed a general direction, trusting to luck and to the wisdom of the old Indian who had come as a guide. All trails had faded. Tired men were pitted against inscrutable mountains.

By the middle of September the last vestige of wild life had vanished. Melted snow was the only source of water. The wanderers killed a colt which

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served them as food, and Meriwether Lewis urged the band forward.

His party was weakening already for want of food. One day a pack horse was lost, and with it all of the Virginian's winter clothing, leaving him with nothing but the buckskin on his back—the poorest of all his crew.

“We killed a few pheasants, and I killed a prairie wolf which together with the balance of our horse beef and some crawfish which we obtained in a valley creek enabled us to make a hearty meal, not knowing where the next was to be found.”

Horses floundered and staggered from want of food, having nothing to eat but dead leaves from occasional fringes of brush. Death played through the mountains, death and the ogre of starvation.

Except for melted snow they were waterless. Food stores were gone. One day thirty-three men, the woman, and her baby had but three pheasants to eat; another day they went without a bite of anything. The Virginian sucked cold air through his parching lips, knowing that death marched close beside him.

Slowly the lagging wanderers came again upon level country. They had crossed the Rockies!

Meriwether Lewis felt much as doubtless did young Hannibal coming at last to look upon the lights of Rome, for he wrote:

“The pleasure I now felt in having triumphed over the Rocky Mountains and descending once

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more to level and fertile country where there was every rational hope of finding a comfortable subsistence for myself and Party can be more readily conceived than expressed."

Their toils, however, were not yet at an end. They found themselves again in the humid sultriness of late summer and the captain felt racking pains in his joints and hot fever at his brow. Clark suggested that he should ride, since he was the sickiest in all the troop; but the Virginian insisted that he would walk. The squaw was walking, his dog Brewster was walking, and if anything befell him they could call for help.

Not an hour later, Lewis stumbled, fell, and found himself unable to rise. Brewster yelped, the Bird Woman scurried forward to Clark, and the Corps halted while he cut saplings and built a shelter and laid the ailing captain under it. The Fields boys went out to hunt and brought back a half-starved deer and three pheasants.

All the party ate except the commander. He shunned food and, half-delirious, commanded that the force move on to the river's edge. Timber and grass showed that there must be a river within a few miles. The river certainly would be a tributary of the Columbia. Billy Clark made a stretcher out of a buffalo robe, loaded the commander on it, and York and Patrick Gass carried him.

Five miles brought them to the shore of a swift-running river. Clark decided to abandon the horses and to shape a new flotilla of canoes from

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pine logs; but there was delay; more men were sick. The Kentuckian noted:

"Captain Lewis very sick. nearly all men sick. all men able to work commence building five canoes."

The Fields boys continued to hunt and continued to bring in lean meat and alibis. Fishing proved useless. York and the Bird Woman went out to dig edible roots, but when eaten these roots only added to the miseries of indigestion. Savage Indians were proving a myth, but savage indigestion was proving a terrible reality.

Now and then Indians passed along the river, paddling log canoes or log rafts. Some of them had cargoes of fish, giggered with flint spears. Seeing the stricken white men they stopped and peered. Clark traded beads for a handout of fish, but found his trade a bad one.

Heat increased, steamy and remorseless. At least three-fourths of the party were sick, and except for the loathed roots, dried fruits and berries, there was no prospect of food. Brewster lay at his master's side, sullenly vigilant. The Bird Woman built a tepee for her baby and ailing husband. York and Patrick Gass stayed as handymen, while Clark turned doctor. He opened the medicine box, which until now had been used little. He gave out salts and heavy pills and tartar emetic wholesale. It was a kill-or-cure work-out and, speaking generally, it cured. Nobody died and several decided

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they had rather be up and at labor than to endure the medicine.

After a week of griping and groaning, Lewis showed first signs of convalescence, and Clark was much with him, coaxing him to eat and to sleep. York stood by, too, like a dusky angel, fanning away flies with a leafy brush.

Another horse was killed and eaten.

Early in October, Clark, too, was taken sick, and Patrick Gass turned commander. The wiry little Welshman, John Shields, masterly ax man, continued chopping out canoes and, within a week, had seven finished and put to water. Soon the ailing Corps loaded into the boats and pushed off down the river that would take them, at last, to the Pacific.

Gray haze played along the river and the air again held the smell of autumn. Meriwether Lewis took new health and hope and so, apparently, did his men. They sang and laughed again as the clumsy wallowing boats were swept forward like so many chips.

It was close crowding, five persons to each boat, along with the failing store of supplies. Brewster stayed at the side of his master. Not a third of the Corps was in shape to handle oars, and to make matters worse, one of the boats sank at first testing, which meant that the remaining six were overloaded; but they were with the current.

After one day of boating, the old Shoshone who

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had come with the party as guide deserted without asking for pay. Clark called it good riddance.

Once more on the water, the captain felt better and again took command, as the uncertain fleet went bobbing down the Lemhi into the great Salmon, past the present site of Lewiston, Idaho, named a century later in honor of Meriwether Lewis.

When night came they pitched camp and endured a supper of horse meat. Next day they stopped at the mouth of Almotu Creek, the site of a flea-plagued village of fishermen Indians. There the Virginian traded a few handfuls of beads for more food—three young dogs and a miserable handout of dried fish.

Another day brought them into the waters of the Columbia and into the nation of the Flatheads. Tiny hamlets, rarely ever more than four lodges, were from eight to ten miles apart along the banks. Some of the lodges were built of willow shoots interwoven with river flags, others of pine logs, which had been floated down the river from a land of timber. The Indians lived miserably, dressed scantily and owned nothing but fishing spears and log canoes.

The Corps of Discovery landed for another camp, cold, wet and forlorn. The night brought a weakening of ethics. The captain explains:

“We have made it a point at all times not to take anything belonging to the Indians, not even their wood. But at this time we are compelled to violate the rule and to take a part of the split timber we find



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here buried for firewood, as no other is to be found in any direction."

No game was to be had; no diet save the miserable combination of dog meat, fish, and dried roots, which added new fuel to the fire of indigestion. The Virginian grew better, then worse again. Indians came to sell roots, and seeing the weakness of the white men, waxed insolent and mendacious. Clark, though miserable with dysentery, kept gamely at command, and the Corps kept on without complaint, but in silence that was more stoical than hopeful.

Willow trees showed golden leaves. Wind played through the dwarfed forests and a murmur rose, like the song of the distant ocean. Meriwether lay in his boat and dreamed of the sleepy hills of Albemarle.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ON TO THE PACIFIC

NOW the course of the river was swifter and the remaining canoes kept on through almost continuous rapids, scrambling and slashing in the vicious waters until they arrived at the uproarious Five-Mile Rapids. That night the Corps pitched camp upon the banks of the main Columbia!

There the current was slower. The population of fishing Indians showed increase. Scaffolds of willow brush held tons and great tons of drying salmon. The waters were clear and crowded with fish. Indians paddled about in log canoes, dragging seines of willow brush, gathering in the catch with spears and flint gigs. They were an orderly and kindly people, but badly clad, poor, and much accursed with sore eyes. The Corps of Discovery took some consolation merely from the contact of other mortal men.

Lewis felt a steady revival of spirits. He stopped frequently at the Indian villages, trading trinkets for fish, though by now the Corps had its fill of fish, so the Virginian bought from the Indians a fresh supply of little dogs which he paid for with such trinkets as bells, thimbles, brass wire, and beads.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

With that provender the Corps went on, passed the mouth of the Walla Walla River, and past Mount Adams, duly charted by Van Couver.

One day Clark shot a crane from the river's bank, whereupon a band of onlooking Indians scurried away to their lodges. Fearing trouble, the Kentuckian followed the Indians and offered them a pocketful of trinkets and his pipe for peace-smoke, but all the village groveled and quaked in fear.

The Indians had seen the crane fall from the sky, and connecting this marvel with the fact that the day was one of drifting clouds, they had reckoned that the white man also had dropped from the clouds. The roar of his gun and his use of a burning glass to make fire, gave final proof. By a lucky turn Meriwether Lewis came along, in company with Brewster and the Bird Woman; that satisfied the Indians. They knew that neither women nor dogs ever came with war parties; so the strangers left as easily as they had come.

The food became more eatable with wild mallards and gulls and cranes varying the unholy fare of fish and dogs. The river continued to hold rapids and narrow gorges with treacherous rocks.

William Clark entered this dietary note: "We purchased 8 small fat dogs for the party to eat; the Natives not being fond of selling their good fish, compells us to make use of the dog meat for food, the flesh of which the most of the party have become fond of from using it for some time past."

Progress brought them to a more gracious envi-

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ronment. The Corps stopped to hunt, and within an hour fetched in five deer, four large gray squirrels and a grouse. As a final touch of culinary luxury, one of the men gigged a trout, which, fried in bear oil, gave everyone a toothsome taste.

A few days brought sure signs of white men. On a private tramp with Brewster, the Virginian met a warrior who wore his hair queued under a store-bought hat. Fishermen Indians boasted brass kettles and muskets and cutlasses that had once belonged to British seamen.

Early November found the adventurers navigating the three-mile stretch of pell-mell rapids, where the Columbia breaks its way through the Cascade Mountains. Sea otters frolicked in glistening water. Then the Corps made camp at Government Island, the lower end of which is now East Portland, Oregon. They found the island a luxurious wilderness of timber and wild grains, with immense flocks of water fowls—swan, geese, ducks, cranes, storks, and plovers. The wanderers once more ate well and merrily.

At a village of Flathead Indians, they saw "some guns, a sword, many Powder flasks, sailors Jackets, overalls, hats and shirts, Copper and Brass trinkets." The Indians had nothing to trade but very bad fish, so Meriwether Lewis called another halt to hunt for water birds. The next night he and his followers listened to a far-off rumble that foretold the western ocean, and the next day they came to Sturgeon's Island at Puget Sound, and pressing on

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

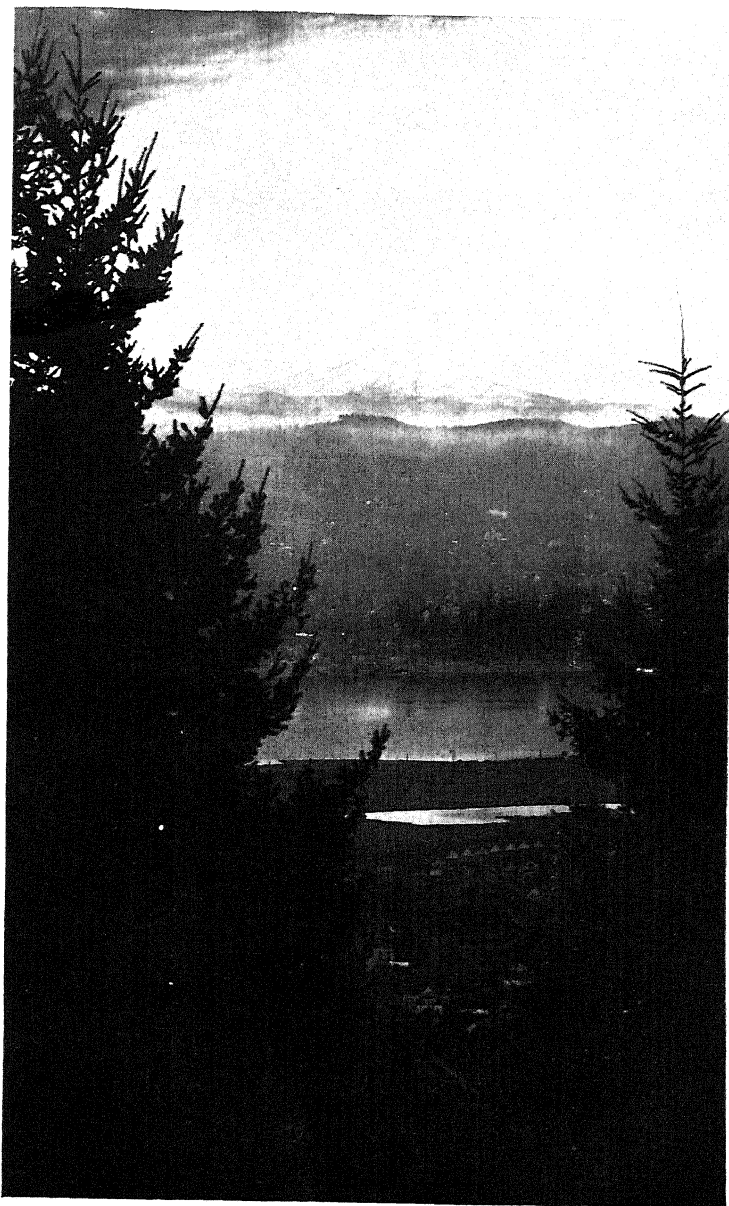
through rolling fogs, the long-traveled Corps went on and on to the Pacific!

"Great joy in Camp we are in view of the Ocean . . . this great Pacific Ocean which we had been so long anxious to see and the roreing or noise made by the waves braking on the rocky Shores (as I suppose) may be heard distinctly," recorded the captain.

It was high rhapsody for the weather-beaten and storm-battered Corps of Discovery, thus coming to the goal after two years of journeying. Lewis smiled, dreaming of new empires; Clark smiled and puffed at his pipe, and the good crew frolicked and sang. The Pacific offered a salute of cold rain, six more days of rain following, days of miserable camping. Finally the wind lulled and the river calmed. Then the Corps proceeded on, passed the blustering point below, "Which," wrote Lewis, "I found a butiful Sand beech thro which runs a Small river from the hills. Below the mouth of this stream is a village of 36 houses uninhabited by anything except flees."

The Corps came within sight of Baker's Bay, and the captain set forth alone in a leaky log boat to ride the waves of the Pacific.

Beyond the mouth of the Wallacut River, he passed two miles of low granite bluffs which were lined with deserted Indian huts. On a low sandy beach lay the skeleton of a stranded whale. Plying above it was a condor, ominously black and with a wing spread of ten feet. Four miles farther on he



*Brown Brothers*

MT. HOOD FROM PORTLAND, OREGON



## ON TO THE PACIFIC

came to a small island of rock, lined with bluffs of yellow clay and soft gray rock. On the south shore of this island he saw an anchoring stob used not long before by ships. There the Virginian landed his canoe, strolled to a mighty fir tree, and carved in its body this inscription:

“MERIWETHER LEWIS, ALBEMARLE, VIRGINIA,  
CAPTAIN U. S. ARMY, NOVEMBER 18, 1805.”

Thus Meriwether Lewis made notation of his victory over four thousand, one hundred, sixty-two miles of American wilderness.

Meanwhile, William Clark had led a party forth to the shore promontory, now known as North Head, of which he wrote:

“This point I have taken the Liberty of Calling after my particular friend Lewis.”

Despite all the downpours of rain, life on the shores of the Pacific represented a decided turn for the better. Timber was plentiful; there were water fowls, and deer—dark colored, heavy-bodied creatures that sprang out of the underbrush and ran like frightened sheep.

Now that they had come to the journey's end, Meriwether Lewis set about to locate a winter camp near enough to the ocean to make contact with any trading ships that might call at port, but enough upland to have fresh water and to profit from game. So he led the Corps intact and all passably well



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across to the north bank of the Columbia and proceeded eight miles through grass-grown bottomlands to Point Samuel, a cape now known as Cathlamet Head.

The wanderers marveled at the birds and reptiles and insects of the Pacific Coast. There were bald eagles and vultures with white wings, blue magpies, brant, geese, hawks, ravens, and crows; also water snakes, lizards, bugs, spiders, and colorful flies.

The list, however, was not particularly edible and the fare once more was desperately scant. The Bird Woman privately presented the captain with a piece of bread that she had carried far to give to her child. Lewis took one bite for friendship's sake and returned it.

The Virginian continued searching for a winter camping site; strolling through untenanted forests, accompanied only by Brewster, leaving his men to busy themselves at hunting, leather mending, and patching their raveled clothing. The western ocean roared and thundered, and he recorded:

"I cant say Pacific as since I have seen it, it has been the reverse."

After four days of wandering the Virginian returned with cheering news. He had paddled his canoe a short way up a rivulet that emptied into his bay, and as a test of hunting resources had killed six elk and five deer. All the party rejoiced and voted to go at once to this haven of game.

Having waited a day for the rain to slacken, they pushed on to the proposed camping place, which

## ON TO THE PACIFIC

the Virginian described as east of Point Adams, southeast of Point Disappointment, a low knoll, heavily grown to tall pines. Here the leaders shaped a trail to the ocean, and on a sand beach located a site for boiling out salt, a commodity now sorely wanted.

The time had come to build another fort. Meriwether Lewis sharpened axes and put all hands to felling trees and hewing logs. Only seven miles inland, the men worked to the tremendous rhythm of the Pacific. Indians from the Clatsop nation waited about as curious onlookers, coming from their villages nearby.

By the twenty-fourth of November the huts were built, roofed, floored with split logs, and furnished with rough-built bunks. A diagram of Fort Clatsop, traced by Clark upon the elk skin cover of his field book, shows a log-lined stockade fifty feet square, with a log cabin of three rooms built within the northerly wall, each room with a central fireplace. Four smaller cabins were built along the south wall, two of them with fireplaces. The middle part of the stockade, a space twenty by forty-eight feet was left as a parade ground, with barred gates opening to the west.

Christmas day found the wanderers under shelter, their leader says:

At daylight this morning we were awake by the discharge of the firearms of all our party & a salute. Shouts and a song which the whole party joined in under our windows, after which they retired to their rooms.

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were cheerful all morning. after breakfast we divided our Tobacco which amounted to 12 carrots one half of which we gave to the men of the party who used tobacco, and to those who do not use it we make a present of a handkerchief. The Indians leave us in the evening all the party snugly fixed in their huts. I recved a present of Capt. L. of a fleece hosrie [hosiery] Shirt, Drawers and Socks, a pr. Mockersons of Whitehouse, two dozen white weazils tails of the Indian woman & some black roots of the Indians before their departure.

we would have spent this day the nativity of Christ in feasting, had we anything either to raise our Sperits or even gratify our appetites, our Diner concisted of pore Elk, so much spoiled that we eate it throu mear necessity. Some Spoiled pounded fish and a few roots.

Meriwether Lewis recounted the coming of the New Year:

Fort Clatsop; 1806

January 1st.

This morning I was awoke at an early hour by the discharge of a volley of small arms, which were fired by our party in front of our quarters to usher in the new year; this was the only mark of rispect of this day tho' better than that of Christmass, consisted principally in the anticipation of the first day of January 1807, when in the bosom of our friends we hope to participate in the mirth and hilarity of the day, and when with the zest given by the recollection of the present, we shall completely, both mentally and corporally, enjoy the repast which the hand of civilization has prepared for us. at present we are content with eating our boiled Elk and wappatoe, and solacing our thirst with our only beverage *pure water*.

## CHAPTER XV

### PACIFIC WINTER

**F**ORT CLATSOP was built, but being built, it gave no real cause either for pride in attainment or for revelry. The Pacific winter was an anticlimax. The log huts were tiny and windowless and hastily built. Roofs were thatched with brush and the thatching leaked during succeeding weeks of cold drizzle and murkiness. Game was shy and hunter's luck inconsistent.

Sometimes a stocky, cow-like deer would roam too close and meet a tragic and highly beneficial fate. Sometimes the more expert riflemen would bring in provender of wild geese or ducks; but often the fare was desperately lean, and the Fields boys, now recognized as champion hunters, oiled rusty muskets and pined for the grazing buffalo of the Missouri.

It was a time for waiting and hoping, but mainly waiting. Endless, drizzling rain dampened the common spirit. William Clark complained of the Corps' unnatural quiet. Nobody wanted to talk or shout or sing. The monotony of sitting around was varied mainly by lying down. Even Brewster reflected the common sentiment. His uproarious ex-

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cursions into the underbrush were abated. He stayed in his master's cabin, scratched his fleas, and slept.

Charbonneau and his squaw built themselves a separate residence in the form of a willow-brush tepee. Their son, now arrived at the serious age of nine months, huddled in a home-made robe of deer skin, gazed stoically at the drab world about him. The Bird Woman was silent and almost as immobile as a granite boulder.

Meriwether Lewis was convinced that his own silent and lonely habits had turned contagious. His Corps was about as gregarious as a grove of white oaks. Clark scribbled at his journals and drew endless maps of places seen or surmised. York, who shared the hut of the two commanders, no longer jigged and capered. He squatted before the smouldering rock fireplace and whittled. John Shields, the lyrical Welshman, acquired whooping cough, and became for that reason the most conspicuous member of the Corps. There could be no real doubts as to his whereabouts or his occupation, which was coughing.

Meriwether Lewis tended his spectral command. Except for rheumatism and colds and occasional indigestion, his Corps was in fair condition; but lightness and laughter were gone from them. They had discovered the Pacific and the experience had proven about as thrilling as discovering influenza.

The Virginian still felt that he lived and walked

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in a dream, but now the dream was a sombre one, begotten of coarse meat and hard beds.

Having nothing better to do, Lewis decided to compile a census of neighboring Indian tribes. When weather allowed he took his rifle and his dog and strolled through tumbled countryside, meeting and confabulating with the nations.

The undertaking involved no peril except that of contagious disease. Indians of the Pacific were a decidedly unpromising lot, poor, greedy, half-starved, flea-plagued, squalid, and generally pathetic. Fish and scavenger meat gave them their main fare. Except for an occasional flintlock bartered from traders they had no adequate hunting weapons. Even the muskets were almost never usable. They were rusty and firing parts were usually broken.

The Indians lacked tribal organization. Some called themselves Clatsops and others Flatheads, because of their habit of binding the heads of young babies to boards, which left them more or less disfigured for life . . . with foreheads sloped at unreasonable angles.

Clusterings of brush lodges were scattered here and there. There were no great chiefs, no war parties nor organized hunting bands; no uniformed dress nor fineries. Even in winter the poor people were close to nakedness. Strips of elk hides which they wore about their mid-parts were ragged and badly cured. Sandals were unknown; all the tribes

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went barefoot. Swollen joints and sore eyes were unpleasantly common.

Their one outstanding talent lay in petty thievery. The Clatsops took particular pride in pilfering; they stole from traders, from neighbors, and even from their own families.

Meriwether Lewis was now most interested in locating an ocean ship which would offer his Corps safe return by water. Inquiry among the Indians, carried on by sign language or native dialects which the Virginian studied laboriously, brought the following information as to vessels and traders who had made calls along this shore:

A list of the names of Sundery persons, who visit this part of the Coast for the purpose of trade, &c&c. in large vestles; all of which speak the English Language &c as the Indians inform us;

Moore	Visits them in large 4 masted ship, they expect him in 2 moons to trade
1 eyd Skellie	in a large ship long time gorn.
Youin	In a large ship, they expect him in 1 moon to trade with them.
Swepton	In a large ship; they expect him in 3 months back to trade
Mackey	In a ship, they expect him back in 1 or 2 months to trade with them.
Meship	In a ship, they expect him 2 months to trade
Jackson	Visits them in a Ship and they expect him back in 3 months to trade
Balch	In a ship and they expect him in 3 months to trade

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Mr. Haley	Visits them in a Ship & they expect him back to trade with them in 3 Moons. he is the favourite of the Indians (from the number of presents he gives) and has the trade principally with all the tribes
Washilton	In a Skooner, they expect him in 3 months to return and trade with him —a favourite
Lemon	In a Slupe, and they expect him in 3 moons to trade with them
Davidson	Visits this part of the coast and river in a brig for the purpose of Hunting the Elk returns when he pleases he does not trade any, kills a great many Elk &c.&c
Fallawan	In a ship with guns he fired on and killed several Indians, he does not trade now and they do not know when he will return

Back in Washington, Thomas Jefferson was trying to gain official sanction for dispatching a Navy frigate to Nootka Sound; but to gain even the mildest suggestion of such a plan brought waspish protest from Congress, the Secretary of War, and the ambassadors of England, France, and Spain.

So the Corps of Discovery waited in the tiny log fort, starvation distressingly close at hand.

Winter was on now, in wet, bleak monotony. Game, though not entirely wanting, was scarce. Steel brought a few beavers and otter, but hunting parties frequently came home hungry. Early in January a whale stranded on the seashore, a few



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miles from the little fort, and Indian tribes for hundreds of miles gathered to feast. Lewis sampled the flesh and found it good, noting later :

“It was white and not unlike the fat of Pork . . . Very palatable and tender, it resembled the beaver or the dog in flavor. the want of bread I consider trivial provided I get fat meat, for as to the species of meat I am not very particular, the flesh of the dog, the horse and the wolf having from habit become equally familiar with any other.”

After returning to camp the Virginian manned the canoes and led a party to take meat and blubber of the stranded whale, and after diligent surgery, brought home more than a ton of it, “having sent this monster to be *Swallowed by us* instead of *Swallowing of Us* as Jonah’s did.”

Captain Lewis pondered upon the ways and scope of ocean commerce, saying :

“Whether these traders are from Nootka Sound, from some other late establishment on this coast, or immediately from the U States or Great Britian, I am at a loss to determine, nor can the Indians inform us. the Indians whom I have asked in what direction the traders go when they depart from hence or arrive here, always point to the Southwest from which it is presumeable that Nootka cannot be their destination; and as from Indian information a majority of these traders annually visit them about the beginning of April and remain with them six or seven Months they cannot come immediately

wood on this river is like that common to the Cumberland  
narrower than that common to the lower part of the  
Missouri and Mississippi and wider than that on  
the upper part of the Missouri. The wild rose, i.e. rose  
honey suckle, seven bark, elder, alder  
aspens, choke cherry and the broad and narrow leaved will-  
ow are natives of this valley. The long leaved pine forms  
the principal timber of the neighbourhood, and grows  
as well in the river bottoms as on the hills. The fir  
and larch are confined to the higher parts of the  
hills and mountains. The tops of the high moun-  
tains on either side of this river are covered with  
snow. The mosquitoes have been exceedingly trou-  
blesome to us since our arrival at this place.

Thursday July 2<sup>d</sup> 1806.

All arrangements being now completed for carrying  
into effect the intended scheme we had planned for execution  
on our return, we saddled our horses and set out I  
broke leave of my good friend and companion Capt.  
Clark and the party that accompanied him. I could not  
avoid feeling much concern on this occasion although  
I hoped this separation was only momentary. I pro-  
ceeded down Clark's river several miles with my party of  
some men and five Indians. Here the Indians recommen-  
ded me foraging the river which was rapid and 150 yds  
or 2 miles above this place I passed the entrance  
of the East branch of Clark's river which dis-  
charges itself by two channels; the water of this  
is much warmer than the main stream and is from  
40 to 120 yds wide. as we had no other means of  
foraging the river we busied ourselves collecting  
dry timber for the purpose of constructing raft  
- In being across me you I consider the

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from Great Britian or the U' States, the distance being too great for them to go and return in the balance of the year. From this circumstance I am somewhat induced to believe that there is some other establishment on the coast of America south West of this place of which but little is yet known to the world, or it may be perhaps on some island in the pacific ocean between the continents of Asia and America to the South West of us."

Likely as not, the Virginian was right in either guess.

In 1788, an English trader named Meares founded a trading post at Nootka Sound, and later built and launched the first oceanwise vessel ever brought forth on the West Coast. Three years later some American traders had founded a post at Clayoquot, where they also built and launched a tiny schooner.

The brig, *Lydia*, whose home port was Boston, had been in Columbia waters in November of 1805, about a fortnight after the Corps of Discovery had passed down stream. In *The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt*,<sup>1</sup> skipper Jewitt confided:

"We proceeded about ten miles up the river to a small Indian village where we heard from the inhabitants that Captains Clark and Lewis from the United States of America, had been there about a fortnight before on their journey overland, and had left several medals with them which they showed us."

<sup>1</sup> pp. 149-150.

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The ships had passed in the night and the helmsmen of new frontiers were stranded.

Slow rounds of camp life continued, hunting, salt boiling, and wood gathering. All the party were perforce content to wait in camp until early spring, at which time they hoped for homeward passage by ocean ship. The journal continues:

Not any occurrence today worthy of notice; but all are pleased that one month of the time which binds us to Fort Clatsop and which separates us from our friends has now elapsed.

This morning we were visited by a Clatsop man who brought with him three dogs as a remuneration for the Elk which himself and nation had stolen from us some little time since, however the dogs took the alarm and ran off.

The Indian dog is usually small or much more so than the common cur; black, white, brown and brindle are the most usual colors. the head is long and nose pointed, eyes small, ears erect and pointed like those of the wolf; hair short and smooth except on the tail where it is long as that of the cur dog and streight. . . .

The Corps had looked and waited for ships. But none had come. January and February followed in slow, uncomfortable monotony. The fare grew worse. When need required, dog meat tided through lean days. Small black bear strayed through the countryside occasionally and when the hunters succeeded in bagging one, that gave occasion for feast.

Bad meat, brackish water, and drizzling rain heralded the entry of March. The Corps, ragged,

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bearded, and close-lipped, waited stoically, growing more gaunt and more miserable as slow days followed. York and Patrick Gass took the laurels for industry. They were the official woodcutters. The Fields brothers continued as principal hunters.

Meriwether Lewis felt himself come upon with surging restlessness. Time and men had forgotten him, forgotten him and all his men. Where were the promised ships? Perhaps their coming had been mad romancing of half-starved Indians. Maybe they were spectres. He and his Corps were men of flesh. They certainly couldn't ride phantom ships. And if no true ships came, there were the thousands of miles of rivers and mountains to be traveled again en route home.

William Clark had no advice to offer. Gaunt and hollow-eyed he scribbled at his maps and papers. He had come to the autumn of youth; his temples were graying and his mop of brown hair showed streaks of gray.

Lewis had grown still browner and harder. Tiny wrinkles showed about his eyes and lips, but his hair stayed raven-black and his beard grew by inches. Razors had become dulled and lost. All the Corps wore beards now except young John Colter, who was old enough to muster only a first showing of manly fuzz.

Charbonneau, the interpreter, complained of rheumatism and swollen joints and family troubles. A squaw with papoose is always costly on victuals.

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The Bird Woman was eating him out of house and home—such as it was. True, Captain Merne Lewis gave them their fair share of meat; but the Bird Woman ate more than he, and the papoose still squalled at night. All in all, his domestic resources were on the down-grade. During all the winter, and with all his vexations Charbonneau had whipped his wife only twice. Then one night when she failed to quiet the papoose and Charbonneau had chosen to visit her with a more complete chastisement, the woman had run wailing to the Virginian, and he had announced that whippings had come to be against the rules of his Corps.

Meriwether Lewis was troubled. He comments:

We have three days provisions only in store and that of the most inferior dried Elk—a little tainted. *a comfortable prospect for good living*. . . . Everything moves on in the old way and we are counting the days which separate us from the 1st of April and which bind us to Fort Clatsop.

Vague foretellings of spring were appearing. The elk had begun to shed their antlers, for one thing, and our explorers began to speak more and more wistfully of undertaking the return.

Indian barter grew harder:

Two handkerchiefs would now contain all the small articles of merchandise which we possess; the balance of the stock consists of 6 blue robes, one of scarlet, one uniform artillerist's coat and hat, five robes made of our large flag, and a few old cloths trimmed with ribbons.

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on this stock we have wholly to depend for the purchase of horses and such portion of our subsistence from the Indians as it will be within our power to obtain. a scant dependence indeed, for a tour of the distance of that before us.

The Virginian had given up all hope of returning by ship.

His Corps had gone through to the Pacific, but had found there nothing but sea and wilderness and want. Each day the force weakened. Each day the men grew sadder and more gaunt and deathly tired of their hovels, tired of the endless, teasing visits from the beggar Indians.

Springtime could bring no great improvement. Canoes were aging. Final stores of powder and ammunition were waning. Muskets were rusty and worn to a sorry stage of inefficiency. Shields, the diminutive Welshman, turned gunsmith, but the best of his skill could keep only a dozen rifles in usable shape.

Lewis counted days and announced that the Corps would leave for home on the first day of spring.

The leafing of the hucklebury reminds us of spring.

There were other reminders. The air bore the scent of far-away cedars and the smell of earth soon to be verdant. Brewster showed plain signs of the reawakening. He spent solemn nights howling at the moon. Fancies were turned toward home.

Patrick Gass tried out the five canoes and smeared them with resin. William Clark made up the packs,

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a light enough job this time, for food stores and Indian gifts practically were gone. Sacajawea, the Bird Woman, celebrated by feeding her year-old son a first ration of elk's meat.

Spirits lifted with prospects of travel. The winter at Clatsop had brought no deaths and only one man was gravely sick. That was William Bratton.

The dawn of March twenty-first saw the final start. Boats were mended, luggage was patched, and clothes were mended as occasion allowed.

Meriwether Lewis fired his rifle and the bedraggled band crowded about him and cheered. Brewster barked and frolicked at his master's heels. Druillard played his fiddle, even though the instrument now had only one whole string. York danced. Then Meriwether Lewis raised high his paddle and shoved off the weather-beaten canoe that led the battered flotilla on its return voyage.

Man had conquered the wilderness and the wilderness smiled.

The river, risen from the first melting of snow, bore down upon the voyagers in playful might. The captain was as delighted as any man of his crew. He sensed the lift of awakening life, of brave young leaves. Gray-green willows waved salute. Water birds squawked from the high gray clouds. Blackbirds frolicked in far valleys, and kingfishers played high in search of prey. Frogs called from the marshland. Spring had come—spring the giver of life.



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Going home. Indians shouted and waved from the banks. Meriwether Lewis landed to talk with a chieftain who wore a British sailor jacket ornamented by five rows of shiny brass buttons, proving that the sun never sets on Britain or on brass buttons.

The beginning of April found the Corps still fighting up the Columbia, low in provisions but high in spirits. Lewis and Clark indulged in joint council. They would trade for more canoes, then push on until they could trade all the boats for horses—"for now we view the horse as our only certain resource of food, nor do we look forward to it with any detestation or horror."

Further up on the highlands the forests were white and fairy-like with flowering dogwood. Wild geese and ducks peered about for nesting places. Emerald humming-birds played about tumbled acres of wild flowers. The river flowed free. Spring thaws had added twelve feet to its depth, and the dangers from rocks and snags were duly lessened.

Troubles, however, couldn't stay away. River Indians were skilful thieves. When night camps were made, blankets and trinkets disappeared in spite of tired watchmen and the uproarious vigilance of Brewster. Then one night by way of climax, the Indians stole the dog. Meriwether Lewis was more than warm as he wrote:

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Three of this same tribe of villians, the Wah-clel-lars, stole my dog this evening, and took him toward their village: I was shortly afterwards informed of this transaction by an Indian who spoke the Clatsop language (some of which we had learned during the winter) and sent three men in pursuit of the thieves with orders if they made the least resistance or difficulty in surrendering the dog to fire on them; they overtook these fellows or rather came within sight of them at a distance of about 2 miles; the Indians discovering the party in pursuit of them left the dog and fled . . . we ordered the centinel to keep them out of camp, and informed them by signs that if they made any further attempt to steal our property or insult our men, we should put them to instant death.

This was the first time the Virginian had referred to any Indians as "villains" and it was the first time he had used the threat of death; but stealing a man's dog makes a difference.

Chill days wore on. One of the canoes smashed on a high rock, spilling passengers and cargoes into the foamy brown water. Passengers were saved; but loads were increased to eight or nine people for every boat, which made the going hard and perilous.

Lewis labored at the paddle. Besides Clark, York, Patrick Gass and the Fields, his boat now carried Brewster, the Bird Woman and her baby.

So the forces splashed on toward the portage place.

Horse buying was hard labor. Even the Chopunish people owned but few and asked exorbitant prices for those. At the mouth of Mill Creek,

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Clark left the party and taking York went inland for a round of horse buying. He came back with only five, paid for at a dear price. He had spent all surplus knives and clothing, and all cooking utensils but the three iron kettles. The horses were scrawny and vicious. They kicked and fought at the merest prospect of carrying back packs. The Virginian located an Indian village where he spent his sun-glass and a pistol for two more horses.

Then he returned and divided the force. The poorest two canoes he burned. The other two he gave over to Sergeant Pryor and two troopers who were to keep on up river as far as they could, and if possible trade the boats for horses, then follow the main party. That done, he divided the remaining luggage into six packs, placed them on the horses and gave over the seventh horse to Private Bratton, who was too sick to walk.

Meriwether Lewis studied the mountains. He was leading the Corps on the hardest of all ventures. Death waited in the high hills, and life depended upon his leading.

The long portage began. Here the land was desolate and dry. Brown lizards scurried across glistening sand. Meriwether Lewis and his dog Brewster led the procession, keeping close to the river's course in an effort to dodge the added terrors of thirst.

Tall rushes marked the course of Walla Walla Creek. Sheltered valleys held wild roses and honeysuckles. Hunting turned better. Deer grazed

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along the beds of the smaller creeks. Villages of Indians became more numerous. The Virginian continued to barter for horses, going deeper and deeper into his last bag of gifts; but the Red Men here were more generous now and by Mayday he had increased the number of his horses to twenty-three.

Indians were in sorry plights. Plagues of sore eyes oppressed them, as did rheumatism and skin rashes. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark resolved to turn doctors. Here was humanity in suffering. To ease suffering and to give charity is the most telling of all diplomacies. Thomas Jefferson himself had said so. The captains, therefore, gave salves and eyewashes and laxatives generously to waiting lines of sufferers.

Meanwhile, the hunters met with sorry luck, and night after night returned to camp, themselves hungry. Lewis received two horses in return for medicine giving, animals that were promptly eaten.

Finally on coming within sight of the Great Spurs of the Rockies, the wanderers were told by Indians that high mountains still held deep snows, and that no crossing could be made before the next full moon, or about the first of June.

So the Virginian halted his band at the mouth of Lawyer's Canon Creek and set out to buy another young horse for meat. Seeing the desperate plight of the travelers, a village chief presented him with two fine colts, and refused to accept any manner of

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pay. The Virginian, tremendously grateful, said enthusiastically:

"This is a much greater act of hospitality than we have witnessed from any tribe or nation since we have passed the Rocky Mountains . . . be it spoken to their immortal honor."

It was plain now that the Corps would have to wait the melting of mountain snow. Knowing Indians also reported that within a few days shoals of salmon would be coming up river that would bring food in plenty. In view of the bounty, the captain chose a camp-site on the east bank of the Clearwater, near the present village of Kamiah, Idaho.

I am pleased at finding the river rise so rapidly, it no doubt is attributable to the melting snows of the mountains; the icy barrier which separates me from my friends and Country; from all which makes life esteemable—patience, patience.

Slow spring days followed, more days of indolence and hour counting. Throngs of Indians, with sore eyes and lame limbs crowded about to beg medicine. Rumors of white man's magic spread fast. Meriwether dealt generously, then he divided the last holding of Indian gifts among all this party, share and share alike, so that each man now had as trading stock, one awl, one knitting pin, half an ounce of vermillion, two needles, a few skeins of thread, and about a yard of ribbon.

Then another mishap appeared. The Bird Woman's baby, now come to teething age, was sick. The Bird Woman immediately brought him to

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Meriwether Lewis. The Virginian examined the child, who had high fever and a badly swollen throat. He called Clark. The two held consultation while the baby wailed and the Bird Woman wept and wrung her hands. Lewis poured the sufferer a mild dose of salts and washed his throat with a borax solution. All that night he watched the sick baby, and he worked with the sufferer a full week before the little boy recovered—to the joyous surprise of all.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HOMeward BOUND

**M**ERIWETHER LEWIS waited stoically, recording:

Having exhausted all our merchandise we are obliged to have recourse to every subterfuge in order to prepare in the most ample manner in our power to meet that wretched portion of our journey, the Rocky Mountains, where hunger and cold in their most rigorous forms assail the wearied traveler; not any of us have yet forgotten our suffering in those mountains in September last, and I think it probable we never shall.

Late one night, Brewster made a sudden uproar of barking. The Virginian, who had become an excessively light sleeper, sprang up, rifle in hand, and made stern challenge. The challenge was answered with joyous shouts. Sergeant Pryor and his men who had kept to the river at last had located the main body. Even with empty bellies and aching backs they had fought on up river, and now the band was together again.

The wanderers frolicked and cheered, Brewster barked, and the camp, being roused, made merry; but the reunion brought a bleak dawn. There was no game to be found. Lewis and Clark held parley, and decided to clip the brass buttons off Clark's last

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uniform coats. Then he gathered up some empty boxes, colored some borax for eye waters, and giving these to McNeal and York, sent them out to trade with neighboring Indians for food. The two came back by nightfall with about three bushels of edible roots.

The Virginian groaned at the prospect of returning to a fare of roots; taking Brewster he strolled far up the river way. The promised cache of salmon had not appeared, and all game was gone from the woodland, but valleys held wild grass that looked like the foxtails of Albemarle. He heard a bird song for all the world like the Virginia nightingale. He found wild roses, damask red and as large as those in his mother's garden.

There were his men:

Our party seems much elated with the idea of moving on towards their friends and country, they all seem allirt in their movements today; they have everything in readiness for a move, and notwithstanding the want of provision, have been amusing themselves very merrily today, in running footraces, pitching quoits, &c.

Late May brought sure signs of summer. Wild cherries bloomed in odorous profusion. Lizards and horned toads played along the pathways. Bumblebees droned through the shaded woodlands. Black butterflies drifted in the slow wing. Meriwether Lewis reckoned that the day for hazarding the high mountains was at hand. Beyond the mountains was home.



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The Virginian finished his journal of the Indian tribes west of the Rockies, estimating their population at about 80,000. The Fields boys, having recruited York and the half-blind Druillard as aides, took another try at hunting and, to the general delight, brought home five good deer. Next day they doubled the number and the Corps feasted and made merry.

The Bird Woman, in celebration of the final recovery of her baby, led a band to gather edible roots now that the *com-mas* plant was in full bloom. Valleys waved with myriad acres of its delicate blue flowers, which from a distance simulated the proportions of a real ocean.

Venison was dried and roots were packed for toting. Horses were left to graze in the rank grass, in preparation for their lean days in the high Rockies.

When June came, Meriwether Lewis assembled his force and began the march into the mountains. Spirits were high again. The travelers sang and danced and cavorted. Horses were packed and led forth. All the Corps were in walking shape. Private Bratton had recovered, and the youngest member, the Bird Woman's papoose; not to be outdone, walked at least a dozen steps before falling into the waiting arms of William Clark.

The exodus was gay. Bearded, tousle-headed troopers, dressed in ragged buckskin; weather-blackened and bent, a goodly number of them barefoot, some toting long-barreled and rusty rifles,

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others leading obstreperous horses, pack horses that were lean and wiry and evil-eyed, moved on into the high sunlight.

Meriwether Lewis led, rifle swung low on his shoulder, buckskin togs creased and greased with use, a brace of pistols strapped to belt, and Brewster, woolly and black and scarlet tongued, tagging at his heels.

Nearing the mountains, the wanderers noticed a whitish glare, that was anything but reassuring. It meant snow—perhaps deep snow; but summer had already come to the valley lands. The Virginian recorded that he found a nest of humming birds, and that he saw dog-tooth violets as big as a dollar piece; but this was no venture in wild-flower picking.

After one day the way turned rough. Fallen trees obstructed the trail. First bluffs appeared, and even though mountain maples showed brave young leaves, sodden snow waited at their bases, and the snow grew deeper—five, six, and seven feet. Hatchet marks that blazed the route on tree trunks soon were snow-covered.

Meriwether Lewis hesitated. To lead an unguided journey through a seven-foot snow was madness. It would mean death for him and all his Corps. So the Virginian turned his party back and returned and made camp in a grassy valley, where he proposed to find Indians who would serve as guides. This was the first and only retreat in all

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the expedition, and it was not an easy one; but the Virginian acted for the lives of his men.

He sent messengers to look for guides, offering as rewards two good muskets, and if the guides would go on to the great falls of the Missouri, some of the horses. Charbonneau, the Mandan half-breed who had been so long out of the active picture, accomplished the feat, with three young braves from a Kooskooske village, competent men who knew the mountain ways well and were agreeable to the promised payment.

The Corps again set forth for its do-or-die fling at the Rockies, the guides leading, Meriwether Lewis and Brewster bringing up the rear.

At nightfall the Indians explained that they would bring fair weather to the journey, and to do this burned several fir trees. The lower trunks of the giant trees held stubs of dead limbs. These the guides lit with torches, and presently the flames spread to the very top of the mighty trees, roaring forth to the sky and lighting the snow-piled countryside for miles about.

The next day the Corps advanced twenty-eight miles without once halting, and, when night came, the last treasury of roots and a pint of bear grease was served to each man.

Yellow lilies peered out of the spreading snow and baby pheasants scampered for shelter as the plodding caravan of pack horses and thirty-four gaunt, buckskin-clad men, a squaw, a papoose, and

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a great black dog made through torturing, treacherous miles.

On the last day of June, the Captain met with his first accident. In navigating the steep side of a cliff, his pack horse fell and pulled him over for a forty-foot tumble; but man and horse were saved by drifts of cushioning snow.

On the day following the Virginian set forth another bold plan. He would break his force into three parties: one to follow up Maria River and to explore its valley; the second to accompany the first as far as the falls of the Great Missouri and there reclaim the caches that had been buried on the way out; and the third to follow on overland to the Yellowstone, ascend that river to the Missouri and there wait a common meeting.

Since the first group would likely be faced with the most dangerous mission Meriwether Lewis chose to lead it and called for volunteers to follow him. About half the force answered the challenge, and of them he chose seven: Sergeant Patrick Gass, Joseph and Reuben Fields, Frazier, Warner, Druiillard, and Brewster. Four others of the Corps went by boat to the chosen meeting place. The rest, including the Bird Woman and her baby, would follow Clark on to the Yellowstone, and thence down to the head-waters of the Missouri.

A final day of grace was given to hunting and dividing packs. On the third of July Meriwether Lewis and his band set out, all mounted, buckskin

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clad, and destitute of luggage save for rifles, powder, and lead, and a few pounds of scorched venison. The Virginian headed to the northwest, made down the west bank of Bitter Root River, followed it to Hell Gate River, and proceeded along the left bank of that stream, then struck toward the Big Blackfoot by an Indian road which would lead over the main ridge of the Rockies.

Swarms of mosquitoes drifted into the valleys. Brewster barked much, and his master slept but little. They were nearing the Blackfoot country and the Virginian had heard sorry tidings of the tribe.

A week brought the band again into the plains of the Missouri, and the adventurers rejoiced, for there they found game in unfailing abundance. Joseph Fields killed the year's first offering of buffalo, a most welcome one, and Meriwether Lewis entered in his journal the lyrical note:

The morning was fair . . . the air was pleasant and vast assemblage of little birds which crowd to the groves on the river sung most enchantingly.

Continuing on the way they found fresh signs of war parties—camps newly abandoned. One night half the adventurers' supply of horses was stolen, apparently by prowling Blackfeet; but mosquitoes had proved the most serious menace to progress. Even Brewster spent his nights scratching and yelping from their bites. Wolves howled at night, and, during the daytime, barked impertinently at the

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voyagers. Signs of the Blackfeet grew more numerous, and Meriwether Lewis was worried.

The Minnetarees and the Blackfeet Indians rove through this quarter of the country and as they are a vicious, lawless, and rather abandoned set of wretches, I wish to avoid an interview with them if possible. I have no doubt but what they would steal our horses if they have it in their power and finding us weak, should they happen to be numerous, will most probably attempt to rob us of our arms and baggage.

Lewis's uneasiness proved well grounded. On beyond the forks of the Maria, Two Medicine River and Cut Bank Creek, he saw on a hilltop a band of about thirty horses, most of them saddled. It looked to be a war party. The Virginian pondered. If he should retreat, the warriors would likely consider his force a sorry one and give pursuit. So he called together his men and went forward.

The Indians stood their ground sulkily. Still uncertain of his welcome the Virginian made toward them with outstretched hands. At first meeting the Blackfeet seemed friendly enough.

Meriwether Lewis presented the three who claimed to be chiefs with the flag, medals and handkerchiefs, tokens which the Indians took eagerly. Then all the party rode to the river's edge, there to pitch a joint camp.

I took the first watch and set up until half after eleven. the Indians by that time were all asleep. I roused up Fields and directed that he watch the movement of the Indians and if any of them left the camp to

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awake us all as I apprehended they would attempt to steal our horses.

Then he fell to sleep, that dealt a tragic awakening. At beginning of dawn he became aware of a great commotion. One of the warriors had slipped behind Joseph Fields, who was sentry, and wrested the gun from his hand; then snatched away the musket of the sleeping brother. At the same instant two other Indians grabbed the muskets belonging to Druillard and Meriwether Lewis.

The Fields boys made hot pursuit of the first Indian, and Joseph, struggling to retake his gun, drew out his bowie knife and stabbed the warrior to the heart. The Indian staggered forward some fifteen paces and fell dead.

By now Druillard had regained his rifle and prepared to open fire on the other pilferers. Meriwether Lewis motioned him to stop, and before he could speak further the Fields brothers shouted that the Indians were making off with the horses, leaving their own in their eagerness to make away with the white men's. The Indian who had snatched the Virginian's rifle joined with the rustlers. Meriwether Lewis followed, and drawing his pistol commanded that they halt.

The rustlers hurried on and at a distance of some three hundred paces drove the stolen horses into a bluff niche. The Virginian again shouted that he would open fire if the horses were not returned, but the Indians took no notice. Thereupon Meriwether

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Lewis drew his pistol and fired. Another warrior stumbled to the ground, then whirling about returned the fire with the Virginian's own musket. The shot went high, but the Virginian, bareheaded, felt the bullet whizz above his head. The discoverers charged forward and retook the horses. The Indians, now in flight, had left their bows and arrows at the camp. These Meriwether Lewis tossed into the fire, then set about loading packs for an immediate start. Time was precious. Chances were that a strong party would shortly be on their trail.

First blood had been shed. One Blackfoot was dead, another wounded. Meriwether Lewis grieved. He did not chide the stalwart Fields but repented of his folly in dividing forces. Had all the band been together, the Indians would never have made the raid; but now there was no remedy. The hatred of the Blackfoot Nation was roused, and it would live long.

Tradition has it that this unlucky encounter brought on enduring hatred toward white men, a hatred which burned in the hearts of the Blackfeet and neighboring tribes for the better part of a century. Lewis predicted hostility, and he regretted that the spirit of his President's orders had not been abided by. A warrior dead and a warrior wounded gave foundation for future wars.

The adventurers pushed on as rapidly as their horses could carry them, Brewster running close beside his master. All day they rode, and when a



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supper was finished and the dog fed, they pushed on through moonlight. At daybreak the adventurers took a few hours of rest, then remounted and continued the journey.

They kept on toward the prescribed rendezvous until the presence of seeps and springs told that they were nearing a river. Presently the wanderers heard the far-away report of a rifle, and heading their horses toward a protectorate of timber, continued cautiously, not knowing whether they had been cut off by a war party of the Blackfeet or whether they were within gun sound of comrades.

Three miles farther they heard a salute of rifles, plainly from the river banks to the right, and, hurrying to the river's edge, saw two light canoes coming bobbing down the rapids. The horsemen scrambled down from the bluff and hailed the buckskin-clad mercuries who had followed the river.

It was a joyous meeting. The boatmen had come through the eighty miles of treacherous waters without damages to the precious baggage.

Together again, the party hurried to locate the cache buried at the river's mouth during the preceding summer. To their delight they found the white rowboat and the three canoes well enough preserved to be usable; so they fetched them out, chopped new oars, and loading on their scanty packs and the loyal Brewster, pushed off down stream toward home.

It was a day of thanksgiving, a day which brought the Corps once more to the friendly and muddy

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waters of the Missouri, where game was about in primeval abundance.

When night came, whip-poor-wills called from the brambled forests; antelopes wandered through the plains; packs of wolves howled in the moonlight.

The next day the journeyers made a record stretch of eighty-three miles, which took them to the mouth of the Yellowstone. On a gravel shoal they came upon a newly abandoned camp site. Beside the smouldering fire lay a cut of elk's horn in which Meriwether Lewis found a note from his particular friend, William Clark.

The note told that the main party had made their journey in good order, but on finding game scarce at the meeting of the rivers, had decided to drift down stream a few miles where hunting was better, there to await the other parties. The vanguard pressed on until darkness had come, but still Clark and his band kept ahead. Meriwether Lewis decided to go on a hunt and obtain fresh meat as a present for William Clark. He called halt and then took his party ashore. The boatmen had heard rustling underbrush and scampering hoofs which told that elk waited close along the river's bank.

Lewis pushed his boat to shore and landed Brewster and Private Druillard. When the Virginian shoved ashore and reached for his rifle, the half-blind soldier went with him.

With the help of Brewster, they soon located the

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elk herd, and the Virginian ran with all his might in an effort to circle the band and head it back toward the river.

Druillard, peering through the underbrush, caught a blurred glimpse of the Virginian's buckskin clothes, and so fired, believing his quarry an elk.

Brewster barked frantically, and Meriwether Lewis stumbled to the ground with a flesh wound in his left thigh. The lead ball had cut deep, and the Virginian called to his companion:

"Damn you, man, you've shot me!"

He heard no answer and, groaning, struggled to his feet and with the puzzled Brewster at his side, hobbled back toward the river, shouting to his follower that there were Indians about.

There was still no answer. The Virginian struggled on until he arrived at the shaded banks where the canoes had waited. Patrick Gass ran toward him and, proving his tremendous strength, lifted the tall Captain into his arms and carried him to a nearby moss bank, where he stripped him of his clothing and washed and dressed the wound, which was bleeding plentifully; but the bullet had struck neither bone nor artery.<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Gass called the band together and made camp, and in company with Brewster kept watch over the wounded commander. By morning the

<sup>1</sup> The reasons for Druillard's strange behavior have never become clear, as we know nothing more about the episode than the few facts the Journal itself presents. Lewis made no later charges, and, on the contrary, gave Druillard's name on his recommended list. The Gass Journal makes no mention of the accident.

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Virginian had a high fever, but he asked that they push on and overtake the advance party. So the soldiers paddled furiously and the boats sped swiftly over the water. By noonday they sighted smoke from the right-hand shore, and pressing around a last bend of willow, came upon William Clark and the main Corps, camped for the noonday meal.

It was another joyous reunion. William Clark, who was only mildly sentimental, embraced his wounded friend. Troopers pressed about with anxious solicitations. The Bird Woman came wistfully, holding up her papoose who was again hale and hearty. York insisted that the Virginian take his one buffalo robe that served him as bed. Brewster went among the crowd, sniffing and inviting salutations, tail wagging, eyes sparkling.

Meriwether Lewis closed his journal saying:

As wrighting in my present situation is extreemly painful to me I shall desist untill I recovered and leave my friend Capt. C. the continuation of our journal. However I must notice a singular Cherry which is found on the Missouri in the bottom lands about the beaver ne bends and some little distance below the White Earth River the bark is smooth and of dark brown color. the leaf is peteolate, oval, accurately pointed at it's apex . . . the fruit is a globular berry about the size of a buck-shot of a fine scarlet red.

William Clark and the main Corps had more adventures to recite. They had taken the short route over Bitter Root Mountain, followed along

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the east bank of Bitter Root River and, entering the valley called Ross Hole, passed the present site of Lulu, Montana, and crossed the Great Divide at Gibbon's Pass, a way less dangerous than their out-bound course by Lolo Pass.

During all the tangled course, the Bird Woman had proven a valuable guide, for she knew most of the country from childhood and showed a remarkable sense of direction and skill at trail-finding. The main Corps had arrived at the Yellowstone not far from the present site of Livingston, Montana. Tramping was hard. The unshod horses wore their hoofs sore. Clark called a halt and equipped the beasts with moccasins made of fresh buffalo hides. Rains came, mountain torrents that found the wanderers at their mercy.

At the main course of the Yellowstone, William Clark had called a halt and set to work at chopping three new canoes from bass wood. Since his party were half-naked and in tatters, extra days were taken for making clothing of fresh hides.

At Clark's Fork, an upper tributary of the Columbia, the voyagers chopped out two more canoes of cottonwood and, lashing the crafts together, Clark and his followers abandoned the horses, loaded packs in the five clumsy boats, and paddled on down the Yellowstone. Reaching the mouth of Tongue River, they proceeded to portage the Bad Fords, a sequence of fierce rapids.

The Yellowstone was conquered by canoe. Since leaving the point of separation, the Kentuckian's

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party had traveled eight hundred and thirty-seven miles—more than six hundred miles of it by boat. They had come again to the waters of the muddy and devious Missouri, with all members well accounted for. So the comrades met, on the twelfth day of August, 1806, and William Clark turned doctor for the Virginian's wounds.

On Friday, the thirteenth of August, the homeward journey continued. Sentry Indians looked down upon them from high hilltops. Wolves yelped from densely wooded banks. Arrived at the Minnetarees Nation, the Corps was greeted cordially by the Great Chief Black Cat, whom they invited to join them in their return to Washington, an invitation which the chief declined, for fear of being murdered by the hostile Sioux.

The Mandans were exceedingly hospitable and shared their lean stores of corn and beans. Private John Colter asked discharge to join another expedition to the upper Yellowstone. Meriwether Lewis gave permission and presented the good soldier an order for full pay and promised land, and joined the rest of the party in wishing the youth every success.

During the years that followed, John Colter, boy voyager under Meriwether Lewis, became a fabled figure in the Far West land. He was first to explore the site of Yellowstone National Park, was captured by the Blackfoot Indians, from whom he made a Nick Carter escape, and on returning to St. Louis

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in 1810 gave valuable geographical information to William Clark, who was at that time still laboring upon a map of the Great West.

This was the homeward stretch and Meriwether Lewis found himself almost well again, his wound improving with every successive mile. The travel-battered flotilla pressed on, oars flashing in late summer sunlight—rowing from dawn until sunset, down stream for a gain averaging seventy-five miles a day.

Friendly villages of Indians crowded to the shore to give greetings. A Mahara fetched down ten bags of corn, borne by mules which were marked with Spanish brands.

Meriwether Lewis paused to visit various of the villages, speaking for peace among all tribes, repeating the good intentions of the Great Father at Washington, urging that chiefs come with the party to visit the Great Father. The chiefs were skittish but finally the Big White Chief of the Mandans agreed to make the far journey to the White Man's Town, provided he might take along his wife and son, and a friend and the friend's wife and two sons; a proposition which Meriwether Lewis accepted though gingerly. So the Corps continued, increased by two chiefs, two squaws, and three fat little Indians, who whimpered and bawled and roused the profound contempt of Brewster by pulling his ears and tail. At the last Mandan village Charbonneau and Sacajawea, the Bird Woman, and

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her papoose left to resume their lives among the river Indians.

Meriwether Lewis urged them to stay until they reached St. Louis. Both Charbonneau and the Bird Woman shook their heads. They knew little of the white man's life and cared to learn no more. In the white man's towns they had no acquaintances, no way of earning a living; among the Mandans they were happy and at home. So the Virginian gave the interpreter a signed order for the full amount of his wages—five hundred dollars and thirty-three and one-third cents; and the Corps shook hands all around.

The Virginian was loath to part with the Bird Woman. William Clark was more loath to part with her little son, now nineteen months old—"a butifull, promising child." The Kentuckian asked that he might take the baby and raise him up in St. Louis town, and so make of him a great man. The Bird Woman listened stoically and said that in another year's time Clark might take the child and bring him up to be a great man. Then she wept and held the baby close, while Charbonneau fired his musket in a farewell salute.

The voyagers stopped at their first encampment, Fort Mandan, where they had spent the long hard winter two years before. Most of the log works had been burnt and the river bank had cut sharply shoreward, giving good promise that all the buildings would soon be lost. Meriwether Lewis pon-



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dered upon the futility of mortal buildings and hopes.

Summer was waning now. August had turned the grass sear yellow. The river's course was molested by new shoals of sandbars. Another winter would come and death would again doze along the bends of the great river.

They passed a village of white leather lodges, which told of Cheyennes. Having heard rumors of the ill-doings of this tribe, Meriwether Lewis stopped to greet them and to urge better behavior; but the fat little chief, Grey Eyes, smilingly assured him that his people had done no wrong, that only the Tetons did wrong; that his were a good people, thereupon presenting the Virginian two quarters of smoking tobacco, a brace of beaver skins and a trencher full of boiled corn and beans—which was in keeping with traditions of the Missouri tribe, who gave to each white man entering their lodges something to eat.

Meriwether Lewis smoked his pipe, now filled with good tobacco, and reveled in late summer solitude. Luscious red and blue and golden plums were ripening in the river brakes. Crows cawed from high treetops.

They were homeward bound. After more than two years, the unreal world through which they traveled seemed more unreal than ever. On the third of September there arrived the first word from home. James Airs, British trader bound up river

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from St. Louis, hailed them, and the Corps stopped for parley. The Virginian's first question dealt with the health and fortunes of Thomas Jefferson of Albemarle.

Well and flourishing, so far as the Britisher knew. James Wilkinson had been Governor of the Louisiana Territory since July of 1805. He had been stationed at St. Louis with three hundred troops, but now the force had been moved down river.

England and Spain were slipping nettles under the saddle of the new American government. England was pirating American sailors from American ships. The British man-of-war *Leander* had fired upon the American boat *Richard* and killed a seaman.

Aaron Burr had killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel.

They talked long. The frontier Britisher presented Meriwether Lewis with a barrel of flour. The Virginian returned the favor with six bushels of Indian corn. So they parted, and Clark wrote in his journal:

I am happy to find that my worthy friend Capt. L. is so well as to walk about with ease to himself &c.

Two days later, a St. Louis trapper bound up river gave salutations in the form of a gallon of whiskey, from which Meriwether Lewis straightway poured each member of his party a good dram—the first whiskey they had tasted since the fourth of July, 1805. On the ninth day of September

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Meriwether Lewis joined in a festive footrace, just to prove that he was no longer a casualty.

Another day they met a flotilla of rowboats commanded by Capt. Robert McClellan of the United States Army, another Virginian who had served with Lewis and Clark under Mad Anthony Wayne. Here again was joyous reunion.

The brother officers camped together and talked all night, and on parting gave each man of the Corps another dram. McClellan and his band continued up river under official orders to teach the Ricaras tribes the ways of white man's agriculture. He had lately met the President and had been particularly instructed by Mr. Thomas Jefferson to search for any word of the fortunes of Meriwether Lewis and party.

That night when another camp was made, William Clark recorded:

Our party received a dram and Sung Songs until 11 oClock at night in the greatest harmony.

Next day the Corps met up with another of Lewis's Army friends—a Capt. John McClellan. When the two met, hand clasps gave way to bear hugs—and spoken salutations lengthened into a full day and night of talking.

Captain McClellan reported that Meriwether Lewis and Corps had long since been given up as lost by the general public, but that President Jefferson still held hopes for their safe return.

The Army friends parted company with a due

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exchange of well-wishes, and the returning voyagers pressed on under blistering late-summer sun. They were going home.

On the twentieth of September the Corps of Discovery sighted a group of cows grazing along the river's bank and at that sure sign of civilization made joyous shouts, and fired a salute. The cows looked on in contented astonishment.

Coming home.

. . . We purchased two gallons of Whiskey for our party for which we were obliged to give Eight dollars in Cash . . . an imposition.

Meriwether Lewis, now recovered from his wound, was able to man an oar. The world about him was still one of mystic unreality, but its dreaminess would fade when he reached home.

Deer swam across the river . . . Wild turkeys strutted along the bank . . . but the voyagers were too busy at their oars to care to hunt. By mutual agreement they adopted a fare of pawpaws, a banana-like wild fruit of the Southwest. It was poor fare, but when a wanderer is within sight of home, he is apt to forget even food.

Coming home. Meriwether Lewis stayed with his oars, speaking little and gazing away into the brassy summer sky. Home from what history would soon name the most significant exploration in all American history. Home to the ironic emptiness of fame, to the green valleys of Albemarle, to the mosquitoes of Washington town, to the theatre

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of lost youth! Meriwether Lewis planted a powerful brown hand deep into Brewster's mane. Maybe it was a matter of coming from loneliness into more loneliness. His world and his few friends would be scattered. Middle age beckoned him, middle age and a forgetful world. Here was Clark, friend of his bachelorhood, now a gray-haired man. The Virginian closed his eyes and tugged at his oars.

On the last day of summer, the journeyers came in sight of St. Charles, and saluted the river village with three rounds of musket-fire.

It was Sunday and the natives were occupied with parading by couples along the river bank, beaux in flapping summer linens and flowing sideburns; damsels in voluminous white satins and linens and bustles and curls, and far-spread hats. Blanketed Red Men sprawled before log-built saloons. Buckskin-clad farmers whittled and spat in convenient shade. Negroes tramped dusty paths and all in all any manner of happening was more than welcome.

Hearing the uproar of firearms, everyone, bartenders included, gathered at the river and sighting the crew of tattered and long-haired wanderers stood puzzled until Meriwether Lewis pushed his boat ashore and shouted his name and business.

Then the crowd showed wondrous hospitality. Every man of the Corps, down to Brewster, was asked to spend the night and partake of fare.

York was immediately surrounded with a dusky throng of admirers, to whom he spoke loquaciously

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and for whose enlightenment he executed complicated jigs. Brewster stayed at his master's heels, panting. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark accepted the hospitality of a Basil Troulx, fur merchant, leaving the Corps to enjoy the evening without orders or work.

The next day the wilderness victors pushed on to the new Army post of Fort Bellefontaine, a frontier storeplace, resourced with a fountain of artesian water. The soldiers of Bellefontaine gave the voyagers a generous salute of musketry and a feast of Army victuals. That done, the Army barber favored each man with a complimentary shave and haircut.

The day after, pounds lighter, the corps made on to St. Louis, where they were joyously received by August Choteau, the trader whose friendship Meriwether Lewis had won on his arrival at St. Louis almost three years before. He volunteered to accompany the Virginian to Washington, and gave good whiskey to all, including the seven Mandans.

William Clark, brother helmsman, finished the journal of the great Expedition:

Wednesday 24th of September 1806

I slept but little last night however we rose early and commenced wrighting our letters. Capt. wrote one to the President and I wrote Govr. Harrison & my friends in Kentucky and Sent off George Droulliard with these letters to Kohoka & delivered them to Mr. Hays &c. we dined with Mr. Chotoux to day, and after dinner went to a store and purchased some clothes, which we gave to a Tayler and directed to be made.

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Thursday 25th of Sept. 1806

had all our skins &c suned and stored away in a store-room of Mr. Caddy Choteau. payed some visits of form; to the gentlemen of St. Louis, in the evening a dinner & Ball.

Friday 26th of Sept 1806

a fine morning we commenced wrighting &c.

In the course of St. Louis merry-makings, Meriwether Lewis paid keen attention to the sayings of the town. River frontiersmen were thoroughly disgusted with their Territorial government and its administration. They were particularly wrathful at Federal failure to confirm Spanish land grants. During the years between 1795 and 1800, Spain had offered rich bounties of land to American immigrants as a way of encouraging settlement, grants wholly unsurveyed, and with only the written or verbal agreement of the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Louisiana as warrant of ownership. Complete titles were obtainable only at the Province Capital in New Orleans, and the great majority of settlers were not able to afford so long and expensive a journey, even had they been at all interested in legal chicaneries.

With the retransfer of Louisiana to France in 1800, thousands of fraudulent grants had been circulated among the first skirmish lines of pioneers.

In its act of March 26, 1804, Congress, reorganizing the newly acquired territory, had declared all grants of public lands consequent to the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1800) null and void.

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This bland saying had made thousands of Louisiana's frontiersmen legally homeless. The far hinterlanders were protesting and muttering. In January of 1805 the far-away solons at Washington town had authorized a commission to investigate all land claims; but Meriwether Lewis was more than skeptical of Congressional commissions and he was entirely certain that until land issues could be generously straightened, Louisiana would stay the world's greatest hornet's nest.

The Virginian wrote first of all to Thomas Jefferson—a letter long and enthusiastic and abounding in carefully placed details. The closing paragraph was:

The anxiety which I feel to return once more to the bosom of my friends is a sufficient guarantee that no time will be expended unnecessarily in this quarter. the rout by which I propose travelling is by from hence by Cahokia Vencennes LouisVill Kty the Craborchard Abington Fincastle, Stanton and Charlotsville to Washington. any letters directed to me at Louisvill 10 days after the receipt of this will most probably meet me at this place. I am very anxious to learn the state of my friends in Albemarle particularly whether my mother is yet living.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Jefferson answered Meriwether Lewis's note joyously and promptly.

Washington, Oct. 20.06

I received, my dear Sir, with unspeakable joy your letter of Sept. 23 announcing the return of yourself,

<sup>1</sup> *Jefferson Papers*, Bureau of Rolls, Series 6, Vol. 11, doc. 103.



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Capt. Clarke & your party in good health to St. Louis. The unknown scenes in which you were engaged & the length of time without hearing of you had begun to be felt awfully. Your letter having been 31 days coming, this cannot find you at Louisville & I therefore think it safest to lodge it at Charlottesville, it's only object is to assure you of what you already know, my constant affection for you & the joy with which all your friends here will receive you, tell my friend of Mandans also that I have already opened my arms to receive him. Perhaps, which in our neighborhood; it may be gratifying to him, & not otherwise to yourself to take a ride to Monticello and see in what manner I have arranged the tokens of friendship I have received from his country particularly, as well as from other Indian friends; that in fact I am preparing a kind of Indian hall. mr Dinsmore, my principal workman will shew everything there. Had you not better bring him by Richmond, Fredericksburg and Alexandria? he will thus see what none of the others have yet visited & the convenience of the public stage will facilitate your taking that route.

I salute you with sincere affection.

TH. JEFFERSON.

CAPT. M. LEWIS.

Sir Thomas was joyous at the Corps' safe return. So, for that matter, was a goodly portion of all the country:<sup>1</sup>

Never did a similar event excite more joy through the United States. The humblest of its citizens had taken a lively interest in the issue of this journey, and looked forward with impatience for the information it would furnish. Their anxiety, too, for the safety of the Corps, had been kept in a state of excitement by lugubrious

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson *Introduction*, Biddle Ed.

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rumors circulated from time to time on uncertain authority and uncontradicted by letter or other direct information from the time they had left the Mandan town, on their ascent up the river in April of the preceding year, 1805, until their actual return to St. Louis.

Meriwether Lewis and his followers had justly earned rest and glory. They had broken a first pathway through a wilderness to become one of the nation's great realms—of farms and towns and productive industries. They had paved a way by which the United States might come to hold true vantage among great powers of the world.

But Meriwether Lewis, conqueror of three thousand miles of American wilderness, was sad. He had fulfilled his mission. He had traveled to the end of a fateful road and back again; but night had come again to his soul and silence held his lips. He took sparingly of food and liquor and left Monsieur Choteau's welcoming ball before the merriment was well begun.

Newspapers favored with quaint version the epoch-making passage to the Pacific. Under the date of St. Louis, Sept. 23, 1806, the Baltimore *Federal Gazette* explained:

Concerning the safe arrival of Messrs. Lewis and Clark, who went 2 years and 4 months ago to explore the Missouri, to be anxiously wished for by everyone, I have the pleasure to mention that they arrived here about one hour ago, in good health, with only the loss of one man who died. They visited the Pacific Ocean,

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which they left on the 27th of March last. They would have been here about the last of August, but for the detention they met with from snow and frost in crossing the mountains on which are eternal snows. Their journal will no doubt not only be importantly interesting to us all, but a fortune for the worthy and laudable adventurers. When they arrived 3 cheers were fired. They really have the appearance of Robinson Crusoes—dressed entirely in buckskins. We shall know all very soon—I have no particulars yet.

The Frankfort, Ky., *Palladium* of October eighth, carried:

A letter from a gentleman at St. Charles to a gentleman in this town, dated 23rd of September, 1806:

I have the pleasure to inform you of the arrival of Captains Lewis and Clark.

They were the first white people that ever visited that country. By the best accounts they could get there are about ninety or one hundred thousand inhabitants, (Indians) on the west side of the Rocky Mountains; horses without number.

It is thought to be a very poor Indian that did not own 300 horses. Not an iron tool among them. They erected a fort on the seashore and engraved their names. They have a number of curiosities; among which is a wild sheep; its head and horns weigh about 80 or 90 pounds. He was caught on the Rocky Mountains.

The Philadelphia *Register*, for October 28, 1806, printed this article "from a Kentucky paper":

St. Louis, Sept. 23, 1806

Dear Sir—Captains Lewis and Clark are just arrived, all in good health. They left the Pacific on the 23rd

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of March last—they wintered there. They arrived there in last November; there was some American vessels there just before their arrival. They had to pack one hundred and sixty miles from the head of Missouri to Columbia river. One of the hands, an intelligent man, tells me that the Indians are as numerous on Columbia as the whites are in any part of the U States. They brought but one family of Indians, of the Mandan nation. They have brought several curiosities with them from the ocean. The Indians are represented as being very peacable. The winter was very mild on the Pacific.

I am your's &c

JOHN MULLANPHY

P. S. They left St. Charles May 20th, 1804, and returned here September 21st, 1806.

The New York *Gazette*, just two months after the triumphant homecoming, carried this résumé:

Have lately been told that Mr. Lewis and party passed last winter near mouth of Columbia; this is in lat. 46, 19' north and long. 123, 38' W from London; it was named by Captain Gray in 1791 or '92 for his ship, and the southern cape for the late president Adams. The bay is some miles broad and 20 or 30 long; the tide rises 12 feet at the mouth of the river, but the current is so strong it does not run up it more than 60 miles. The river and its tributary streams abound in salmon. The timber is pine, maple, ash, poplar and oak. The natives are badly armed though some have copper swords.

The head of the Columbia lies south of the 45th degree; the distance from the mouth of the Missouri to that of the Columbia is 1440 miles in a direct course, which will probably never be traveled.

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The Philadelphia *Aurora* of December 22, 1806, published a letter dated at Frankfort, Ky., November 19:

Captain Lewis arrived at this place on Thursday last, and on Saturday morning proceeded on his journey to the city of Washington, by way of the old wilderness road. He was accompanied by the chief of the Mandan Indians; and a party of the Osages. Mr. Choteau, with the latter, took his route through Lexington.

The *National Intelligencer*, for October 27, 1806, carried this announcement:

It is a pleasure to announce the arrival of Captain Lewis with his exploring party at St. Louis. They wintered near the mouth of the Columbia river; leaving thence Mar. 27, were detained by snows in the mountains until June 24. He found it 2575 miles from the mouth of the Missouri to the great falls; then by land over the Rocky mountains 340 miles of which 200 would admit a good road, the rest over tremendous mountains. Thence 73 miles down the Kooskooske into a southeasterly branch of the Columbia, 154 miles down that to the Columbia, and then 413 miles to the Pacific; 3555 miles in all. Speaks of the whole country furnishing valuable furs. Says it was fortunate that he sent no men back, since they owed their lives more than once to their numbers. Captain Lewis will remain a few days in St. Louis, and then proceed to Washington accompanied by the Mandan chief. He speaks of his colleague Captain Clark in the most affectionate terms, and ascribes to him an equal share in the success of the enterprise. . . .

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CORPS IS DISCHARGED

**A**T ST. LOUIS Meriwether Lewis left his men to play while he fell to military paper work. He wrote out individual discharges to each member of his Corps, made ration and clothing credits, reckoned them generously, and entered recommendations for added bounties in public land.

Here is a typical paper of discharge:

St. Louis October 10th, 1806.

To all whom it  
may concern

Know ye, that the bearer thereof William Bratton, private in a corps destined for the discovery of the interior of the continent of North America, has faithfully discharged his duty in said capacity so long as his services have been necessary to complete the objects of a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean, is in virtue of the authority vested in me by the President of the United States hereby discharged from the military service of the said States; and as a tribute justly due the merits of the said William Bratton, I with cheerfulness declare that the ample support which he gave me under every difficulty, the manly firmness which he evinced on every necessary occasion, and the fortitude with which he bore the fatigues and painful sufferings incident to that long Voyage, entitles him to my highest confidence and sin-

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

cere thanks; while it eminently recommends him to the consideration and respect of his fellow Citizens.

MERIWETHER LEWIS Capt.

1st. U. S. Regt. Inftry.

I certify that the within named Wm Bratton has received from me all arrears of pay clothing and rations due him by the United States from the date of this enlistment to the present date October 10th. 1806.<sup>1</sup>

Disbanding his Corps was no easy duty. His men had become comrades and friends. Now that the journey was finished and the day for parting was at hand, most of the Corps chose discharge so that they might take advantage of the promised bounty of government lands. Only three, McNeal, Winsor, and Goodrich, reenlisted in the slumbering Army.

Still accompanied by Brewster, Lewis spent a considerable part of this time in St. Louis at strolling through the forest lands that adjoined the sun-washed village.

As a soldier, he had gained his mission. His Corps had been the first to cross the North American continent by land; an epoch-making feat, news of which would travel throughout the civilized world. He had kept on to the last mile of the way. He had gambled his life and his military career, and he had won.

The years had matched his cards. Now maturity and middle age were upon him, in his blood and spirit and muscle. He was sad, and he could not

<sup>1</sup> *American State Papers*, Military Affairs, Series 1, No. 68.

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make due explanation of the sadness not even to himself.

William Clark, a happy warrior, was superbly contented with the village's rounds of revelry. Escorted by York, the Kentuckian made unending rounds of revelry and taverns and dinners and balls, radiating good cheer and gallant sentiments.

The Virginian stayed much to himself. The taverns seemed to have turned cheap tawdry. Frolics were empty and mocking. He had lost his appetite for merrymaking and he found little pleasure either in uniforms or in women, and that, for a soldier, is a sorry state of being. He continued to wear an outfit of buckskin.

William Clark protested at his undue moodiness. Meriwether Lewis made kindly answer. He didn't mind living particularly so long as he could walk alone. New work would bring him new happiness, and he would be finding new work.

Middle October saw the Corps discharged and all but the two officers and the Indians gone their way. The Mandans all being completely weary of St. Louis, were anxious to have none of the formal pow-wows with white men.

By now Meriwether Lewis had suffered another bereavement, which not even William Clark could solace. His dog, Brewster, was to go. The black mongrel, after six thousand miles of unwavering loyalty, turned feeble on his return to civilization. The dog was aging.

Lewis administered a mixture of vermifuge and



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calomel, and then when doctorings proved of no avail, he brought Brewster into his room and gave him a woolly buffalo robe to sleep on. Brewster looked upon his master in pathetic gratefulness, but spurned all offers of food. Next morning the Virginian woke to find his dog dead, head forward, between outstretched paws, as if in prayer. Meriwether Lewis was very sad indeed.

For two days Captain Lewis recruited his party for the return to Washington, the Mandans, William Clark and their generous host, Auguste Chouteau. The Virginian decided to go by river board as far as Wheeling, thence by stage to Washington town. His return to Albemarle he postponed, for the east-bound river boats were slow and Lewis reckoned on going as early as possible to the Capital in hopes of gaining the most generous pay possible for his Corps.

On the seventeenth of October, the very day of the start, Thomas Jefferson was delivering a message to Congress, beseeching generous rewards for all the Corps of Western Discovery.

The expedition of Messrs. Lewis and Clarke, for exploring the river Missouri, and the best communication from that to the Pacific Ocean, has had all the success which could have been expected. They have traced the Missouri to its source, descended the Columbia to the Pacific ocean, ascertained with accuracy the geography of that interesting communication across our continent, learned the character of the country; of its commerce and inhabitants; and it is but justice to say that Messrs.

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Lewis and Clarke, and their brave companions, have by this arduous service deserved well of their country.<sup>1</sup>

Congress listened. William Alston, chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, called upon Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War, to present an official list of the deserving sons of the Eagle. Dearborn was prompt to answer:

Sir: Agreeably to the request of the committee, as expressed in your letter of the 12th. inst., I herewith transmit a list of the officers; noncommissioned officers, and privates, who formed the party recently returned from an enterprise, which they commenced and prosecuted with a degree of boldness, perseverance, judgment and success that has rarely, if ever, occurred in this or any other country.

The officers and soldiers will receive their usual compensations from this Department, up to the time of their return from St. Louis.

The quantum of gratuity, whether in land or money, or in both, to which sum meritorious and unusual services may be entitled, on the score of national justice; or on the principles of sound policy and national liberality, being principally a matter of opinion, it is with diffidence I take the liberty of proposing, for the consideration of the committee, a grant to each non-commissioned officer and private, of 320 acres of land; to Lieutenant Clarke, of 1000; and to Captain Lewis, of 1500; with the addition of double pay to each while engaged in the enterprise; and each one should have permission to locate his grant on any lands that have been surveyed, and are now for sale by the United States.

It may be proper for me to remark that Captain

<sup>1</sup> *American State Papers*, Military Affairs Vol. 1, No. 68.

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Lewis has requested that whatever grant of land Congress might think proper to make, to himself and Lieutenant Clarke, it was his wish that there should be no distinction of rank so noticed as to make a difference in the quantity granted to each; and that he would prefer an equal division of whatever quantity might be granted to them.

I also submit herewith the letter from Captain Lewis to the Secretary of War; which accompanied said list.

I have the honor to be, . . . with much respect, sir,  
your obedient servant.

H. DEARBORN.<sup>1</sup>

Back in Washington, village of magnificent distances, of mud and mosquitoes and invincible underbrush, of paunchy diplomats and bellowing legislators, Meriwether Lewis went straight to the task of aiding the cause of his Corps. . . . Clark and Choteau continued on to Monticello with their band of miserable Mandans who were serving their stay in the realm of white men intermittently sick and drunk and consistently unhappy.

In his final list of recommendations the Virginian gave the first consideration to Charles Floyd, the young sergeant who had lost his life in line of duty at the opening of the great journey:

A young man of such merit. His father, who now resides in Kentucky, is a man much respected though possessed of but moderate wealth. As the son has lost his life whilst on this service, I consider his father entitled to some gratuity, in consideration of his loss; and

<sup>1</sup> *American State Papers*, Military Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 68, Library of Congress.

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also, that the deceased being noticed in this way, will be a tribute but justly due to his merit.

The Fields brothers he mentioned as "two of the most active and enterprising young men who accompanied us. It was their peculiar fate to have been engaged in all the most dangerous and difficult scenes of the voyage, in which they uniformly acquitted themselves with much honor." To Private John Shields he recommended an extra compensation as artificer, invaluable repairer of guns and accoutrements. To George Druillard, who had been taken as waterman and handy man and paid at the rate of twenty-five dollars a month, he recommended a bonus in cash.

As a final tribute to the entire Corps the following came under general remarks:

With respect to all those persons whose names are entered on this roll, I feel a peculiar pleasure in declaring, that the ample support they gave me under every difficulty; the manly firmness which they evinced on every necessary occasion; and the patience and fortitude with which they submitted to and bore the fatigues and painful sufferings incident to my late tour to the Pacific Ocean, entitled them to my warmest approbation and thanks; nor will I suppress the expression of a hope; that the recollection of services, thus faithfully performed, will meet a just reward, in an ample remuneration on the part of our Government.

MERIWETHER LEWIS

Captain 1st. U. S. Reg't. Inf.

Meriwether Lewis closed his book of muster. The Corps was paid doubly in wages, ten dollars in

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gold a month for the privates, fourteen to the corporals, and sixteen to the sergeants. Besides this compensation, five complete issues of uniform and equipment for each man and, for each, three hundred and twenty acres of land to be chosen in any part of the surveyed domain of the public.

The Secretary of War favored the recommendation for gratuity to Sergeant Floyd, and forwarded the sergeant's father twenty-eight months of sergeant's pay plus compensation for equipment and full title for three hundred and twenty acres of domain land. To Meriwether Lewis the Government of the United States gave fifteen hundred acres of land; to William Clark one thousand.

Thomas Jefferson was downright glad to welcome home his far-roaming soldier, who was more than glad to be welcomed home. To Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson remained a glamorous mixing of man and god. For twenty-five fast-moving years the younger Virginian had adored both sight and mention of the Sage of Albemarle and Thomas Jefferson, who was anything but a sentimentalist, said of Meriwether Lewis, "He is now become close to me as an own son." Meriwether Lewis once more became a member of the Jefferson family and a guest of the first White House.

The years had told heavily upon Thomas Jefferson. The Lord of Monticello showed plainly toils and trials of being an idealistic President. His sandy red hair was touched generously with gray

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and his broad shoulders were bending with the increase of years. The river of Presidential work had risen now to an uproarious torrent. Work hours stayed from sunup until long after dark. Three Army men now worked as secretaries, which caused the Virginian to feel more than a little out of place.

The great Thomas continued to entertain in a carefree informality; taking first come as first served, giving to State functions the spontaneous hospitality of a frontier. Good wine flowed free, and the cellar door stayed open. Meriwether Lewis revived his sinking spirits. Seeing this, Thomas Jefferson was duly gratified—and he was gratified, too, that Theodosia Burr was no longer in Washington.

The year was aging. Middle December found Washington town at the foggy beginning of bleak winter. Congress was assembling for another jawing fête. Mud-splattered pages were here and there among the shabby outlay of government buildings. . . . Carriages sank hub-deep into Pennsylvania Avenue. Boarding houses were full to overflow with jobseekers and starched-cuff favorists. No spot in all the town was free of the all-prevailing mud. New saloons with rosy clusterings of gaslights offered alluring shelter to the legislative talent of the nation.

Thomas Jefferson was busy and Meriwether Lewis, now lacking official duties, was restless. . . . His Army friends were all at far posts; Theodosia Burr Alston was away in the Carolinas. Aaron

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Burr was away, as Dame Rumor had it, for no good. . . . William Clark, having served as guide for the befuddled Mandans, and provided them return passage to St. Louis, had gone back to the Clark homestead on Bear Grass Creek, giving no specific reason. Meriwether Lewis had his suspicion—nothing more; but he couldn't help feeling that whenever so resolute and well-tempered a young man as William Clark fades deliberately from the scene, there must be a woman in the case.

The Virginian was heartily tired of Washington within a month. The only real pleasure he found lay in stray chances to visit with the President. To be sure, Thomas Jefferson's three fine horses waited to be ridden, but the Captain preferred walking. Now that he had finished his paper work, time dragged and melancholy rolled in upon him like a gray and malicious cloud.

Lewis began to worry a little about himself. He remembered hearing that his father was taken by persistent sieges of melancholia. Could it be insanity? He thought not. Thus far his life had been highly sane and highly real.

Thomas Jefferson was aware of the younger Virginian's plague of sadness, but he spoke of it with no particular alarm:

It was constitutional disposition in all the nearer branches of the family of his name, and was more immediately inherited by him from his father. They had not however been so strong as to give uneasiness to his

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family. While he lived with me in Washington I observed at times sensible depressions of mind; but knowing their constitutional source I estimated their course by what I had seen in the family.<sup>1</sup>

When the newly famous Captain from Albemarle asked his patron-commander for advice, Thomas Jefferson advised a visit back to Albemarle—advice that was not unwelcome. Thomas Jefferson also asked that he not stay away too long, that he keep foot-loose, because he might be needed at Washington as soon as Congress could be smoothed down. Thomas Jefferson advised further that Meriwether Lewis stay youthful. Great work was ahead of him, work that required youth. So the two sons of Albemarle shook hands and parted.

Meriwether Lewis traveled by stage from Washington to Charlottesville, a slow and muddy journey—twenty miles by day and eight to ten by night, jostling and rumbling through wandering forest roads, over sheltered toll bridges and through boisterous creeks. At roadside taverns he kept very much to himself and made no undue mention of his name, for he was a famous man now. His landwise journey to the Pacific had become the talk of many a frontier countryside. Word of the great journey had spread far, even to such commoners as innkeepers and stage drivers, shopmen and caterers, and even to land speculators.

In prevalent estimate, Meriwether Lewis was a dead man, risen suddenly and not without welcome

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson, "Introduction" to *Lewis and Clark*, Biddle edition.



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to life. The Virginian puffed at a long-stemmed pipe, and from the depths of his somewhat pagan heart besought whatever gods there may or may not be that he not outlive that welcome.

Nearing his Albemarle, the Virginian felt a quickening of pulse. . . . Sixteen years had come and gone since he had first left this land. Sixteen winters had washed the countryside with slow rain and soft snows; sixteen springs had blown the breath of life into fields and hills. Sixteen summers had fetched on languid torpor of heats, and as many autumns had touched the hills with golden browns and scarlets and the miracles of frost. . . .

Lewis donned a handsome uniform bought in Washington and pressed his flowing black hair under a three-cornered, white-and-blue military hat. Sixteen years ago he had left in a suit of gray home-woven and toted his worldly belongings in a lone carpet bag. Now he wore the handsomest dress that a military tailor could provide. He had stayed a fighting man and now, by God, he was ready to look any man square in the face.

The stage lumbered forward on the last home stretch. Albemarle was changed. Its countryside was giving way to maturity, to the onrush of middle age. It had lost the youthfulness of a frontier. Its heft and muscles were definitely on the wane. Post-revolution decades had dealt the land little benefit.

Even before the stage had come to its last stand, Meriwether felt a new burden of disillusionment settle upon him. Too often the happiness of return

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lies only in anticipation, as many a home-coming soldier can vouch.

Since the stage was until nightfall reaching Charlottesville, the Captain from Washington town and points Far West took lodging at an inn. Supper finished, he went forth in a drizzling rain to locate old acquaintances of the town. It was a vain quest. The town was changed even more than the countryside about it. . . . Old friends had become scattered. . . . The younger generations of Walkers and Randolphs were gone to the last man. The belles of Meriwether's generation were now planters' wives or hostelry matrons. Not a soul recognized him that evening, save the bartender at the White Crescent, and from that humble source he gained some little information.

Squire Tally, master of the Latin Academy, was dead. Meriwether Lewis next asked the fortunes of his cousin Maria Wood, object of his first love that had died in the stage of pipe dreams—Maria Wood, for whom he had named a bold and handsome river. She, too, had gone, a year ago. Married a backwoods farmer named Scott and with him moved away to the far borderlands of Caroline County.

Meriwether Lewis turned up his collar and strolled out into the murky night, cold and desolate. Dead years pressed upon his brow. His conquest of the western wilderness had brought him fame, but fame is an empty affair. Thirty-three years of living had brought him ten times as much adventure as might have come to the average man in twice

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that time, but life is a honey tree ever beset by maggots and bitterness.

The Virginian trudged to his room. Disregarding the bed he delved into his carpet bag, took out a buffalo hide which he spread upon the floor, undressed, blew out the stand of dripping candles, and covered himself with the heavy robes, the manner of bedding to which he had grown accustomed during his twenty-eight long months of western discovery.

Next morning he awoke at dawn, and shouldering his bag, tramped away along the red-clay road, back to the Lewis homestead. The road was rutted and its high center grass-grown from scantiness of travel. Fields which during his boyhood days had grown tall tobacco now held only the dismal spectre of dead cotton stalks. Cotton was taking the exhausted countryside, cotton that was soon to be king to all the Southland. Some of the farms were abandoned; their red fields grown to sumac and sas-safras and to underbrush.

Arrived at the farm, Meriwether saw wasted fields and straggling interludes of cotton, shabbily planted and shabbily harvested. The very fields that he had worked with his own hands were sunk to the commonness of poor cotton, a Negro crop. Tobacco was the white man's crop. Cotton was a slave's crop, and it looked its part.

Lewis turned into the dense grove of poplars that sentineled his home. The old house waited, its sullen red brick bleakly defiant to the passing of

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years and stations. A ragged Negro strolled forth to inquire the newcomer's business. Meriwether handed the man his luggage and went into the house.

Signs told of encroaching poverty. He found the Widow Lewis-Marks aging and silent and much doomed to the humdrum premises of her rocking-chair. A malignant rheumatism had partly paralyzed her legs. Her health and good cheer were faded; but she was tremendously glad to welcome home her famous son. The two talked of old times.

John Marks, the plump and practical stepfather, had died two years ago, with a fever. Meriwether's two half-sisters were fast nearing womanhood. John Marks had left them virtually without legacy. The girls were away in school. Young John Marks, Meriwether's stepbrother, had entered Williamsburg to study the law and to follow in the illustrious footsteps of Thomas Jefferson. John had taken well to his books and would become a great and just man. John was at home for winter holidays. Of Reuben, Meriwether's own brother, she had heard no word for more than five years. The wilderness had taken him. In this point the home-comer could give no consolation, for during all his wanderings and all his stay at St. Louis, far capital of the West, he had heard not one word of the maverick.

The Lewis-Marks holdings were at bed rock. The plantations depended upon the handful of slaves left by John Marks. And the Negroes, like the fields, were becoming old and forsaken.

Meriwether showed the title to his fifteen hun-

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dred acres of government land. Here would be a plantation and in an unconquered country. They could all move West and make a new start. The mother had lived and grown old with Albemarle. Her father and grandfather had taken life and fortune from the red earth of the Virginia frontier. It was too late now for her to make so drastic a change. Her own wants were few, and she could manage to educate her daughters. If Meriwether saw fit, he could keep young John through college. Meriwether agreed. He had wanted to do that.

Besides reunion with his mother, home-coming brought to Meriwether Lewis at least one other pleasure—the company of young John Marks, who was now seventeen. Young John was promising and clean and good to look upon. He read much, babbled Latin and spoke learnedly of the law. He had held a real adoration, too, for the woods and fields and hills, and he kept a highly competent pack of coon dogs. John Marks looked upon his famous foster-brother with the most profound admiration.

The two hunted together, with the energetic co-operation of the hounds, and Meriwether Lewis again tramped through the woods and hills that he had known since babyhood, and looked again with unwavering wonder at the mighty mansion of Monticello, still wanting a master.

Another Christmas and holiday-time came and the furloughed soldier found more than casual pleasure at home. Being rightful master of the

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place, at least during the course of his stay, Meriwether Lewis directed that the Negroes should have all the days between Christmas Eve and New Year's as play day, and he gave to each one a suit of homespun, chose gifts for his mother and sisters, and to young John Marks he gave the handsomest of all, a fine rifle presented to the Virginian by none other than the illustrious Thomas Jefferson.

Soon after New Year's the post brought two important communications. The first was a letter from Kentucky. The Happy Warrior, William Clark, had made good use of his furlough to take unto himself a sixteen-year-old bride, one Julia Hancock, about whose virtues and beauty and charms Meriwether Lewis had heard considerable during the course of the twenty-eight-month journey to the Pacific.

Meriwether Lewis drank solitary toasts, and forwarded his brace of ivory-handled pistols as fitting presents, along with an enthusiastic letter of congratulations.

The other letter was from Washington town, addressed in the familiar straggling scrawl of Thomas Jefferson. Great news was nearing fruition. The Lord of Monticello suggested that Capt. Meriwether Lewis return at once to the Capital. A bundle of *National Intelligencers*, also directed by the hand of Thomas Jefferson, bewailed mightily the infamies of Aaron Burr.

Still a soldier, Lewis was prompt in obedience. He assembled his diminished belongings, bade fare-

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well to his mother, his brother and sisters and to the settlement of Charlottesville, which he had painstakingly avoided, and boarded the stagecoach back to the Capital.

Thomas Jefferson showed the effect of the toils of a hard season; but his well of unquenchable enthusiasm still ran free. Congress had proven more pliable than he had at first anticipated. . . . It had agreed that the valor and enterprise of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark deserved still further reward now by grace of accomplishment, and through power of Congress and the President, Meriwether Lewis was to be appointed Governor General of all the Louisiana Territory. William Clark was to be made Indian Agent for the Territory, with the civil-military title of brigadier general, the third of his family to don the silver stars of the United States Army.

The Captain listened to the telling in delight—Here was the peak of military ambition, a campaign that would be the mightiest and most significant of all his campaigns. William Clark would remain his friend and comrade.

Thomas Jefferson dwelt learnedly upon the civil and legal responsibilities of the appointment. In the first place, it was necessary that Meriwether Lewis resign his commission in the Army; accordingly the younger Virginian took pen and paper and wrote out the resignation, addressing it to Henry Dearborn, Secretary of War. It was a statement worded in quiet dignity and gratitude, a brief

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appreciation of the fairness and generosity of the service to which he had given his youth and young manhood.

Finished with his captaincy, Meriwether Lewis was directed upon a new path of glory. Now he was done with parades and musterings, with the magnificent companionship of marching troops; but with all his elation Meriwether Lewis now felt a new and strange unsteadiness. In resigning his commission he had cut his last thread of real certainty. Even that was an inevitable turn of soldiering. He waited the command of his President.

Meriwether was prepared to start forth at once; but Thomas Jefferson, who had his own notions of order in action, explained in quiet determinedness that the time was not yet ripe for the change in territorial administration. The new governor should wait to assume his duties until Congress was done with; until the incumbent, James Wilkinson, could be retired with complete grace and decorum, and finally not until some judicial handling could be devised for a particular Aaron Burr.

In the President's estimate, Aaron Burr had come to be the principal nettle under the saddle of all American government. This arch stirrer-up of trouble was now in custody of the United States, faced with a charge of treason. James Wilkinson, temporary Governor of Louisiana, was principal witness for the United States.

Since the name Aaron Burr was become synonymous with anarchy and dispersion so far, at least, as



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the government of the West was concerned, Thomas Jefferson reckoned that Meriwether Lewis could best profit by attending the trial as listener. The year was still young. As a matter of ethics, the President would be unable to attend the trial in person. Therefore, Thomas Jefferson could very well use the ears and eyes of Meriwether Lewis.

The Lord of Monticello did not like Aaron Burr, and speaking officially, had never liked him. Burr was sleek and sarcastic and gallingly clever. Burr would stand watching. The Jeffersonians had watched. All that was heinous and infamous the Republican press had joyously traced to the person of this short and swanky little colonel from New York, and Aaron Burr, former Vice President of the United States, now awaited trial for treason, a charge named and forwarded by none other than Thomas Jefferson.

Meriwether Lewis was faced with another change of plans. He was frankly disappointed. For he had no craving to go back to Virginia or to see Aaron Burr put on trial for his life. Furthermore, he had good reason to suspect that Theodosia would be there, and he dreaded the prospect of arousing a love that had gradually and painfully died.

He wrote to William Clark, asking that the Kentuckian proceed at his first convenience to St. Louis, and from that point, study the eddies and quicksand that waited in the way of the coming government of the Louisiana Territory.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MORE JOURNEYINGS

**T**HE trial of Aaron Burr brought gala days to Richmond, Virginia.

General James Wilkinson, principal witness, strutted about like a fattened turkey cock on Thanksgiving Eve. Andrew Jackson strolled about the Court House green soundly damning both Wilkinson and Jefferson. A journalist from New York, a gay young gentleman named Washington Irving, was among the clustering reporters. A wistful young giant named Winfield Scott was there to polish up his knowledge of the law. Meriwether Lewis, now dressed in civilian clothes, dedicated himself to the task of remaining as inconspicuous as possible.

John Marshall, Chief Justice of the United States, was judge. John Hay, head prosecutor, was assisted by Lieut.-Gov. Alexander McRae of Virginia, bearer of a perpetual grouch, and by William Wirt, a shrewd lawyer surging with tender craving to fasten a hemp rope about Aaron Burr's neck.

Aaron Burr led his own defense, aided by Edmond Randolph, former Secretary of State, by John Baker, John Wickisham, Benjamin Botts, and Luther Martin, all skilfully chosen trial lawyers.

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The trial opened cautiously, for the Chief Justice, beneath all his formality, was aware of the skill and cunning of the defense, and he knew along with this that the eyes of the President, the Capital, and a good part of the nation were upon him. The defense was quick to shift to the offense. Luther Martin shouted condemnations of Jefferson.

"He has assumed to himself the knowledge of the Supreme Being. . . . He has set the Hell Hounds of Persecution to hunt down my friends!"

The Court allowed the oratory and the prosecution listened in grim silence. So, for that matter, did Thomas Jefferson; but the Sage of Albemarle did write to the prosecutor to ask, "Shall we move to commit Martin as *Particeps Criminis* with Burr?"

The prosecution thought not. It was there to convict Aaron Burr of treason and that was plenty, in view of the fact that its evidence was being consistently ripped to shreds by the defense. James Wilkinson, chief witness of the United States, appeared now like a turkey cock that had been plucked without being beheaded. State's evidence was little more than ambiguous gossip. For once, Thomas Jefferson was coming out the loser. The New Yorker's sleek strategies were out-playing the Virginian's bulldog determination.

Meriwether Lewis wandered aimlessly among the onlookers. Famous sons were about at every turn, but the serious young man of Albemarle recognized few of them. Few, if any, recognized him. For

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now that Burr's Conspiracy had come to be the crowding topic of the day, the mind of the Atlantic Seaboard was quick to forget the magnificent trek to the Pacific. This state of affairs was not particularly disappointing to the returned soldier. He had not come for plaudits and he had never catered to the favors of Virginia Tidewater.

The young Virginian was more than casually sick at heart. The trial plagued him with melancholia. Thomas Jefferson was being skilfully and effectively interpreted as a conniving egotist, as a common ingratiate, which was infamously untrue. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army was being shown as a stupid and incompetent braggart, which Meriwether Lewis granted, in private, as being rather close to truth. The prosecution was proving itself pathetically weak, and the surviving Federalist press was taking welcome opportunity to hurl mud into the Jeffersonian machinery.

Lewis could see nothing heroic or admirable about the defense. Aaron Burr, whom he had always privately liked, despite party battle-lines, was showing sure signs of age and of dulling colors. His repertoire sounded hard and metallic. His brilliant sarcasm was sinking to the level of personal bitterness.

Age had settled upon him, age and greed and frustration; but Aaron Burr, who had suffered so many defeats was winning this last battle for his neck—winning without glamor of triumph. Jeff-

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erson was losing, like a god who had stumbled into a mortal briar-patch.

The one occurrence that brought the greatest weight of discomfort to Meriwether Lewis was the coming of Aaron Burr's daughter, Theodosia.

Theodosia had arrived from Richmond on the second day of the trial, accompanied by her son, Aaron Burr Alston, who was now three years old.

Meriwether Lewis saw her when she first entered the crowded court room. Theodosia looked neither to right nor left, but went directly to a partly vacant bench, seated herself and lifted her son to her lap. The Virginian saw that Theodosia still wore handsome raiment, and walked with regal grace; but he saw, too, that the years of the far South had borne heavily upon her. Six years had come and gone since they had first met, and in that six years Theodosia was grown old. She was thinner, and her skin was browned and parched by the fury of Southern sun.

The years had called for strict accounting. Her marriage had brought her increase of wealth . . . an heir who would bear the illustrious name of Aaron Burr; but a casual onlooker had no reason to gather that marriage had brought her either increase of health or of happiness.

Her lips showed fine wrinkles, and her eyes were heavy with darkness. Seeing Theodosia, Meriwether was quite certain that he felt the intervening years as much as she showed them. To be sure he

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was still sinewy and sun-browned and straight. His eyes stayed clear. He could still ride well and drink well and dance well, and he had lost none of his military bearing; but if a man is as old as he feels, then Meriwether Lewis was old. Seeing Theodosia, he felt very old indeed.

When the day of court wranglings was done, they met. Theodosia spoke pleasantly. She had read of the great voyage to the Pacific. She had heard, too, of the Virginian's appointment as Governor of all Louisiana. She was proud to have known a young man so brave and so justly famous. The news had brought her no real surprise. If Meriwether Lewis could remember, she had made prophecy of his success, when they last met, back in Washington. She had always believed in him, and so, for that matter, had her father. She would always be glad to hear of his further successes.

Theodosia asked, in kindness, of Thomas Jefferson, about his health and horses and wine stores, his parties and his daughters. Meriwether Lewis found grave difficulty in thinking of anything to say. All the principal events of his life had come about as interludes of silence. This was no exception. Theodosia talked freely and easily. She had no grievances against life. The years had not been especially unkind to her. There were still dawns and sunsets, magnolia blossoms and sweet-smelling earth. Her youth was gone, but it had brought due toll of pleasure, a just and natural trading.

Theodosia had no notion of staying long at the

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trial. That her father had been ruthlessly maligned was evident enough, even in this so-called court of justice. The case was won unquestionably for Aaron Burr. Theodosia planned to leave next day for home.

Meriwether Lewis suggested that they return to a tavern for supper. . . . The dinner was a lengthy one, given more to conversation than to food. Theodosia took her son, put him to bed, and when the child slept, returned again.

Then the two stood at the foot of the stairs and talked, while the tavern surrendered itself to the minor discords of sleep. Finally the bar-keeper, tiring of his solitary watch, ambled away to bed. Theodosia appeared more than a trifle uneasy. She was a married woman and a mother. She had a reputation to preserve.

But Meriwether Lewis, Governor by appointment of all the Louisiana, had heard that line before. He had a life and perchance a soul to save—his own. He held full conviction that this would be their last meeting. Springtime was finished for both. Maturity was come upon them; but if the Virginian reckoned his own age from the heart, then he was the older.

Theodosia could never understand. Youth had dealt generously with her. It had brought her beauty and charm and social station, flatteries and pampering and manifold minor loves. Meriwether Lewis had meant to her simply another casual affair; but Theodosia had been principal of the Vir-

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ginian's one enduring love, a love which no casual passing of months and years could turn into dust. Theodosia didn't understand. She would never understand. Home and husband and son waited her, social and financial surety, stoginess and death.

For Meriwether Lewis, far-away mountains awaited. Rivers with eternal courses. Wilderness with mighty books of secrets and—magnificent loneliness.

The hour was late now. Theodosia held forth her hand. Shadows were upon her eyes and her lips seemed gray and old. "Good-night, Governor—until we meet again." Meriwether Lewis touched the outstretched hand: "We will never meet again."

She disappeared into the crowding darkness. Meriwether Lewis turned about and strolled out into the steel-blue night.

As for the trial of Aaron Burr, Thomas Jefferson had lost beyond the possibility of a doubt. Without formality of reporting, Meriwether Lewis returned to Washington. The world waited in the frigid solitude of late winter. Washington was sleepy and ill-humored, Thomas Jefferson was grim and engrossed in work. The Virginian was counting days and bolstering his spirits with good brandy. He was to receive the reins of Louisiana government in April. Winter days plodded on.

Another springtime was starting another far journey. The country-side stayed bleak, but on the last day of winter, 1807, Meriwether Lewis left Wash-



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ington to become Governor of the Territory of Louisiana. He was going to assume the governing of a million miles of wilderness. He was undertaking again a mission whereupon others had failed; but the grave thirty-three-year-old held one outstanding advantage—he knew as much, and probably more, about Louisiana than did any other man living.

This knowledge was far from reassuring. He knew that Louisiana was a hodge-podge of tribulation—petty corruption or open infamy. Its first holders had come, not as builders, but as pillagers. Ethics of fur dealings and Indian trade were remarkable for sheer rottenness. He knew that he was on his way to grapple with the greatest and most hopeless of all of his missions.

To Louisianians, the United States remained a hazy abstraction of the Atlantic seaboard. The white population, still preponderantly French and Spanish, was set to its own sleepy ways. England continued to wield the lion's share of Indian trade, to bolster her subjects' profits joyously by nurturing a vast traffic in whiskey and firearms.

As governor, Meriwether Lewis would meet other toils, centering in the second vital issue, the mad matter of land ownership. Three-fourths of the farmed area of all the Territory was still without legal title. To be sure, Congress had appointed a title commission to sit at St. Louis; but frontiersmen were not interested in commissions or in legal verbiage. They had their land, and reckoned, by

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God, they would hold it. That was definitely that.

The mighty territory was still without a common language or accepted law. Surveyors, marshals, judges, justices, revenue collectors, territorial commissioners, all were to be appointed. Meriwether Lewis—soldier, fatalist, and dreamer—was not, by any stretch of the imagination, a politician. He had never pretended to be.

During the course of the slow journey, the Virginian busied himself at writing down an outline draft of the troubles facing Louisiana government. In the course of time he was to add to it and verify, and when the psychological moment came he would submit the report to the muffled ears of Congress.

From the commencement of the Spanish provincial government in Louisiana, whether by permission of the crown, or originating in the pecuniary rapacity of their governor generals, this officer assumed to himself exclusively the right of trading with all the Indian nations in Louisiana. He therefore proceeded to dispose of this privilege to individuals, for certain specific sums; his example was imitated by the governors of Upper Louisiana, who made a further exaction. . . .

More recently English fur traders had been poaching on Spanish territory, selling goods cheaper than the Spanish spoils system could allow, and therefore winning the commerce of the richer Indian tribes. Meriwether Lewis had first-rate reasons to believe that English traders were inciting the Sissetons, the Yanktons, the Tetons and various others of the Missouri plains tribes to attack and

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pillage merchandise boats of Spanish, French, or American traders bound up stream from St. Louis, a practice which might in due course jeopardize the lives and prosperity of American frontiersmen.

"I hold it an axiom, incontrovertible, that it is more easy to introduce evil into all states of society than it is to eradicate it." The only hope for an orderly Louisiana lay in strict government of the trader. Now that Spain's political hold was gone, Lewis looked with jaundiced eye on the practices of the British.

No regard for the blood of our frontier inhabitants will influence them at any time to withhold arms and ammunition from the Indians, provided they are to profit by furnishing them.

If the British merchants could only be prohibited from trading in Upper Louisiana, the American trader, backed by possible profits arising from the trade of the lower Missouri, and the western branches of the Mississippi, would be enabled to overcome the rivalry of the Northwest Company in the more distant parts of the continent.

But, if this prohibition does not take place shortly, I will venture to predict that no such attempt will ever be made; and consequently, that we shall for several years be taxed with the defense of a country, which to us would be no more than a barren waste.

Meriwether Lewis next pointed out:

The uncontrolled liberty which our citizens take in hunting on Indian lands has always been a serious source

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of difficulty on every part of our frontier and is evidently destined to become quite as much so in Upper Louisiana, unless it be restrained and limited within constant bounds. When the Indians have been taught by commerce to appreciate the furs and peltries of their country, they feel excessive chagrin at seeing the whites, by their superior skill in hunting, fast diminishing those productions, to which they have been accustomed to look as their only means of acquiring merchandise; and nine-tenths of the causes of war are attributable to this practice. . . .

The Indians, although well disposed to maintain peace on other terms, I am convinced will never yield this point; nor do I consider it of any importance that they should; for with what consistency can we say to the Indians, whom we wish to civilize, that agriculture and the arts are more productive of ease, wealth and comfort, than the occupation of hunting, while they see distributed over their forests a number of white men engaged in the very occupation which our doctrine would teach them to abandon?

Boycott of trade he named as the most effective corrective measure which could possibly be applied to the Red Man.

Impressed with a belief unalloyed with doubts, that the ardent wish of our government has ever been to conciliate the esteem, and secure the friendship of all the savage nations within their territory, by the exercise of every consistent and pacificatory measure in their power, applying those of coercion only in the last resort, I here proceed with a due deference to their better judgment, to develop a scheme which has suggested itself to my mind, as the most expedient that I can devise for the successful consummation of their philanthropic views

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toward those wretched people of America; as well as to secure to the citizens of the United States, all those advantages that ought of right exclusively to accrue to them, from the possession of Upper Louisiana.<sup>1</sup>

Meriwether Lewis never stated that scheme. He was writing down observations, taken during the course of his twenty-eight months of exploration and his six additional months of wandering about St. Louis. The solution he proposed to leave unsaid until he had undergone at first hand Louisiana's Governorship. His paper waited, never to be finished.

<sup>1</sup> Appendix to *Lewis and Clark*, Biddle edition of 1814, Vol. 2, pp. 435-461.

## CHAPTER XIX

### NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER

**S**T. LOUIS waited stoically in the arms of the slow muddy river, a village still sleepy and still friendly; its fringing of red brick mansions, its twisting and muddy alleys of streets, its pelt rows, saloons and cobble-paved river-front changed but precious little since Meriwether Lewis had first come, eight years before, en route to peaceful conquest of Spanish forts of the Mississippi.

Politically speaking, at least, this was a return of triumph. As a little-known Army officer, St. Louis had accorded Captain Lewis kindly hospitality. Now he was back again—as first man of the town, as governor of the largest territory ever annexed by any nation of the modern world—governor of a million square miles of American wilderness.

An enthusiastic reception committee awaited his arrival. Auguste Choteau, cavalier of the pelt rows, Brigadier General and Mrs. William Clark, and York, dressed in a blue soldier's suit and with a smile to be measured with a foot rule.

There was no question that William Clark was headed forward. At thirty-seven he was the third of the Clark boys to become a general, and the sixth to acquire a wife.

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From a standpoint of recognition, the years had been kind to the two youths who had played soldier together back in Albemarle. Here they were together again, Billy Clark, a general, and Merne Lewis, governor of the New American West.

Though he had never hankered for the rôle of cupid, Meriwether was enthusiastic over his friend's laurels in matrimony. Julia Hancock was an admirable wife. Charming youthfulness and strength of body, she was a fit match for her frontier-cavalier husband; and the new Mrs. Clark was delighted to become acquainted with her husband's closest and most illustrious friend.

The Clarks pressed the Virginian with invitations to come and live in their home, but Auguste Choteau forwarded the same invitation and Lewis, with careful diplomacy, accepted the latter—saying that he believed it happier for two wayward bachelors to live together and not pester the newlyweds. So York, grinning and bowing, carried the governor's luggage to the brick mansion of the Choteaus.

Clark had already started work at territorial problems. He had completed estimates of Indian populations, drawn maps, calculated trading areas supported by the various tribes of the Missouri. He was writing rules of fair trade for all voyagers, and exhorting fidelity to United States statutes. He had composed and had printed vast stores of trader "certificates," forcefully worded but badly spelled.

Clark was light of heart. He laughed about his iron-gray hair and his skin that had become as

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swarthy as a Creole's. He testified that matrimony had made him a mere boy again, and urged his particular friend, Lewis, to try the great adventure; but the Virginian's energies were taken with other complexities. His struggles to govern were assuming dimensions of a lonely and dogged war. Three months of office-holding found him living alone, save for a hound named Nathaniel; a weazened little Negro named Jim, of whom the generous Chocteau had made a permanent loan; two wiry Indian ponies bought of a saloon keeper; and a half-starved and wandering Creole named Pernea, whom Meriwether Lewis had found homeless and hungry along the river front.

Pernea was a gaunt, sad ne'er-do-well who had followed the muddy Mississippi since birth. He gave his trade as "voyageur or waterman," and in years past he had floated raft-loads of fur down river for the Choteaus.

He had been shot in a saloon brawl, and flogged half to death at Natchez, by a band of Spanish vigilantes who had accused him of stealing a colt. The torture had left him a bit deranged of mind, and so he had taken to wandering from port to port, from saloon to saloon, hoping for the best and never finding it.

He had begged from Meriwether Lewis, never dreaming that so plainly dressed a gentleman could possibly be the great Governor. But the Virginian formed an instant interest in the wistful, beseeching fellow, this son of humanity that was



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downtrodden and outcast, and gave him a room in which to sleep and a steady allowance for food and drink.

Balls, tendered by the gentlemen of St. Louis, held their merry sway, usually without the governor's company, and the elect of St. Louis wondered. Another springtime came with drowsy life and new solitude. Oak leaves increased from the dimensions of a mouse's ear to the size of half-dollars. River willows put forth their brave leaves. New grass came upon the endless prairies. Bluets waved in slow wind. Meriwether Lewis, who loved nature more than either art or men, spent his occasional idle hours at strolling through the countryside, alone except for his new dog, and the fine companionship of open summer.

Late summer brought sultriness and mosquitoes and new troubles—reports of war threatening with Great Britain. English traders grew more openly insolent. Rumors came that the Territory was being filled with English spies; that the great Indian nations of the Missouri were being bribed and signed as England's allies in war. The *National Intelligencer* told of British autocracies on the high seas. Indians wallowed in St. Louis pelt rows, drunk on British liquor. Half-breed engagers paraded the town laden with British muskets and ammunition. War was in the air. Meriwether Lewis hitched a brace of good pistols to his belt and went on to work.

Endless lines of homesteaders appeared before

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the Governor to plead for land which they had cleared and worked and tenanted in good faith, innocent of the trickeries of grants and titles. Meriwether Lewis showed unwavering sympathy for countrymen who lived upon and worked farms. Honest tenantry of land he believed the one real hope of the realm. So he ran a weather-browned hand through his bountiful shock of hair and decided in favor of the farmer. Commissions and politics he damned! He would favor the man of the earth!

The Governor was forgetting his appearance. Sometimes he rode through the village clad in buckskin clothes and coonskin hat, like an ordinary riff-raff farmer or voyager. He had been seen drinking at common taverns. He kept no vestige of a coach. His two saddle horses were scrubby. He entertained but rarely, and he paid no heed to any woman except Julia Clark, and but precious little to her. Another thing, his luxuriant black hair was carelessly kept and but seldom combed.

Letters came, now and then, from Thomas Jefferson. Among other things the Sage of Monticello wanted to know just when Meriwether Lewis intended to have his journals of the Great Expedition in shape for publication. In all reason, the volumes should have been finished a year ago; but Meriwether Lewis had been busy, and the prospects were that he would stay busy.

Autumn joined summer. Then winter came, bleak, gray, and desolate. Mails from Washington

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were abominably slow. Auguste Choteau left for a trading tour to New Orleans, and Merne Lewis visited at the home of Billy Clark, and stayed on with his work, chatting occasionally with the Clarks, but keeping generally alone.

The Governor's salary was about twenty-five hundred dollars a year, but official and incidental costs kept him hard-pressed for money. He had not yet selected his fifteen hundred acres of bounty land, because he had no time and because he had no way of operating the homestead, had he claimed it.

A frontiersman born and bred, Meriwether Lewis was now getting his fill of frontiersmen. Down-and-outers from the States, riffraff and jail-birds, thieves and murderers and pillagers, all were flocking to the glamorous wilderness of Louisiana, where law and order were abstract and optional, where land was free for the taking.

Now Meriwether Lewis had little time for forests and flowers and birds. There was work, pyramids and tons of papers and worries. The Virginian labored on, feeling himself touched by the yellow leaf of maturity. The toils of governing smothered and sickened him, bound him with shackles of futility. Shysters and exploiters and sleek-tongued real-estate "developers" were there in droves, selling or trading land which they or no one else, save the United States, owned; granting leases unbeknownst to the occupants, importing squatters with a view of building up back country trade-centers and waxing fat therefrom. Congress' commission

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on land titles had permanently adjourned to the Oak and Acorn saloon.

Posts from Washington continued tardy, but as the winter wore on, the *National Intelligencer* brought word of the retirement of Thomas Jefferson—back to Monticello and Albemarle.

For the sake of his beloved friend, Meriwether Lewis was duly glad. The Great Democrat had well earned a rest, but for the Governor of Louisiana, a change of national administration might reasonably be expected to bring added turmoil, if that were possible.

Another springtime came. South winds again blew the breath of life into forests and plains. Melting snows in the far-away mountains put the river into an orgy of muddy celebration, and brought down bobbing caravans of rafts piled high with precious furs. Voyagers and watermen drank and frolicked in seasonal celebrations. William Clark set forth on a good will tour of lower Missouri tribes. Good will was becoming scarcer than money. In a fortnight the Kentuckian was back with reports of tribes ravished by pestilence and sickness, but William Clark brought home more than sorrowful reports. From the Mandan country he brought a new member for his new family—the youngest member of the disbanded Corps for western exploration, the Bird Woman's baby, who was now of a size to run alone, to eat alone, and to take a name—Black Eyes. The Bird Woman had

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brought her son of her own free will and petitioned that Clark bring him up in the way of white men.

Meriwether Lewis raised the youngest trooper into his arms and the ruddy one laughed, whereupon the Governor called a tailor and ordered that a complete uniform be made up for a soldier of three years.

Something had to be done about the disease-ridden tribes of the lower Missouri. The Governor and his Indian agent held parley, and then the Governor ordered three thousand dollars' worth of drugs and medicines for the sufferers, sent the bills to Washington, and sent Clark back into the Mandan country to begin distributing the goods. If the Great White Father at Washington were to keep friendship with his Red children, now was the time for action.

From Albemarle, Thomas Jefferson wrote that he was at last beginning to realize the best cherished craving of his presidency; the chance to stop being President and to browse among his books and papers. Thomas Jefferson again craved to know just when Meriwether Lewis intended to have his journals of the Expedition ready for publication. The months and years were trudging by and science was being neglected.

Summer and mosquitoes and new territorial troubles swooped down simultaneously. Lewis resolved to center all his energy in directing a new legitimate Federal land survey for those parts of

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the territory which were in keenest demand by settlers, particularly the present state of Missouri. He applied to Washington for authority and support. Washington failed to answer. Then by virtue of his commission as governor-general, he employed a crew of five boundary engineers and set them to work. . . . Summer waned, autumn came, and then another winter. William Clark came back, lean and brown and smiling.

Troubles begat new troubles as the American commonwealth continued growing to a riotous adolescence, but the Governor of Louisiana was absorbing none of its youth. Years were crowding upon him, age and loneliness. Grayness was taking his hair, wrinkles showed in his forehead and about his eyes.

One day a gay letter came from Thomas Jefferson, a letter announcing the birth of Meriwether Lewis Randolph, a grandson, also a gentleman of Virginia. Thomas Jefferson had done the naming personally, and Merne Lewis was wondrous proud.

With the opening of another summer the Governor was taken sick, seized with an ailment that turned his skin yellow and fired him with an unnatural heat. William Clark turned doctor and administered herb tonics, remedies which Meriwether Lewis supplemented generously with good strong whiskey, but the humors were not rightly mixed, for the Virginian weakened. He grew thin

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and lost all his craving to be outdoors. Pernea, the Creole, became his nurse.

August brought still another source of irritation, personal and bitter. The Governor's accounts were being doubted and challenged at Washington, challenged by unknown cogs in the floundering machinery of Federal government. Vouchers for his orders of Indian medicines, and for payment for land survey, were returned by the Treasury unpaid without explanation of their refusal.

William Clark warned his particular friend of the dangers of worry, but Meriwether Lewis did worry. He paid off the first rejection from his own purse and when his money was gone he wrote to his friend, Amos Stoddard, now a major of the First Infantry, asking a loan.

New refusals came from Washington; there was no longer a Thomas Jefferson at the helm of government. Meriwether Lewis found life bitter. His competency was being questioned; more than that, his honesty challenged.

He resolved to go to Washington to answer this insolence and tongue-wagging in person. That much was his duty as an Albemarle Virginian, as a soldier, and a gentleman. He was short of money and sick of body and heart, but he was going to Washington.

William Clark protested:

"It's tomfoolery, Merne, and if you weren't sick you'd know it. You're getting all wrought up over some eight-dollar-a-week boot-licker, some speckled

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skunk that never saw an Indian and wouldn't know a white man."

It was beneath the dignity of a governor and a Virginia gentleman to take notice of any baby potato of a bureau clerk.

"To hell with the whole passle of 'em," said Clark.

What was more, this was a rightful occasion for revelry. The Kentuckian roared forth delighted news. Overnight he had become a father. On that day a new son was born to the house of Clark—Meriwether Lewis Clark.

Bachelor or no bachelor, Meriwether Lewis's name was to be duly perpetuated, thanks to the two best-loved of his friends, William Clark and Thomas Jefferson. The Virginian joined in a toast to the health and fortune of this first son of William Clark—who would come to be, by all rights, the greatest soldier of them all.

Not even a new namesake, however, and the cool counsel of his friend could block his determination to tell the hirelings at Washington what they were and were not. Meriwether Lewis was resolved to carry through his plans. He could resign, of course, claim his bounty of land, as Clark had already done, and abandon the sorry bedlam of politics; but if he did quit, that would admit that his accounts were eligible for challenge. Besides, Thomas Jefferson had appointed him governor-general of Louisiana, a land which Thomas Jefferson had given the best talents of his office toward gaining. Thomas Jeffer-



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son had directed the great journey to the Pacific, and Meriwether Lewis had led his Corps to the western ocean and led it back again. Now he most certainly would not flee before the yowlings of a pack of coyote bureaucrats.

He would take passage down river to New Orleans, and go from there by ocean ship to Philadelphia and on to Washington. He would leave William Clark to mind the affairs of government at St. Louis. He would take Pernea along as nurse, and Jim, Choteau's Negro, would go as handy man. William Clark frowned, then smiled:

"Changin' your mind, Merne Lewis, is like changin' the set of a mountain."

Lewis and Clark walked together down to the river front to a cabined flatboat that was to carry the Virginian on his journey of redemption. This was the first day of autumn. The Virginian pondered upon how exactly his life and journeyings had followed with the seasons.

This was a troubled leaving. He struggled hard to stand straight. His thigh ached where he had received the bullet wound two years before. His legs seemed strangely unsteady. His forehead burned and his lips felt like leather. William Clark made firm-jawed scrutiny:

"You're sick, man; you're horse sick."

Lewis appeared not to hear. He turned, leaning heavily upon Pernea, who was resplendent in his new Sunday suit, a garb of dog-yellow corduroy.

"I forgot my clothes."

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Clark smiled. The Virginian was bareheaded and dressed in buckskin breeches and an unbuttoned jacket. Meriwether strolled back to the old Chocteau mansion, Pernea following like a faithful dog. When they returned, the Virginian had donned his best Army uniform, even though he was no longer in the Army. He wore the blue coat, the white sash, and the shoulder stripes of a Captain of the United States Army.

Two more well-wishers had appeared to see him off. York, resplendent in a new suit of striped homespun, held in his arms young Black Eyes, the Mandan who was to be raised up in the ways of white men. Black Eyes squealed in delight and reached toward the tall commander, and Meriwether Lewis lifted the child into his arms and held him close, while York, for old time's sake, executed a jig.

William Clark brought out a keepsake. Meriwether Lewis unwrapped it and held up a gold watch, a key winder, a timepiece that sparkled joyously in the clear-cut sunlight. Meriwether Lewis slipped the token into an inside pocket and smiled. The two friends shook hands and parted. Pernea and Jim followed their master aboard, toting a compact metal trunk that was crammed full of challenged vouchers and neglected journals of the voyage to the Pacific.

Low water promised slow travel. Sweating Negroes tugged at long oars. Traders drank red liquor, and the pilot, a gorilla of a man with an

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expression of perpetual fury, swore at his motive power. Meriwether Lewis strolled to an unbothered deck head and watched the village of St. Louis fade from sight.<sup>1</sup>

Following the river again. Eight years ago he had left on the same journey down river. Then he was an officer with troops. Then he was a youth who dreamed of great conquests. Now the conquests were made. . . .

The slow dull brown Mississippi led them on and Meriwether Lewis felt no betterment, either of body or spirit. He wished that he had taken Clark along, but Clark had double work in St. Louis.

The boat pulled in at Chickasaw Bluffs for a couple of day's trading. Meriwether Lewis planned to rest there at the Army post. But he had little more than landed when he began to overhear talk of a new war. Rumors thick and furious of Britain's pirating of American ships; impressing American seamen, pillaging American passengers. Knowing citizens had reason to believe that British spies were now at every bend of the river front; that British privateers were skulking on the lower waters of the Mississippi.

Such talk was not unusual, but Lewis listened with an unusual dread. He had to get to Washington. He had to deliver his file of vouchers. He had to defend the honor of an Albemarle Lewis.

<sup>1</sup> Lewis to Maj. Amos Stoddard, by permission of the Missouri State Historical Society.

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He was sick and in no good shape to fight. He was Governor-general of the Louisiana Territory. The British would know him. If his ship out of New Orleans should be pirated, or if he should be held up along the river, he would have no chance to clear his name in Washington town. He wasn't afraid—not afraid of all the British in hell or elsewhere, but he did want to finish this journey. Washington hirelings were calling him a thief. They were trying to ruin him, but he would show them—even though he were sick.

The Virginian planned grimly. He would leave the river boat at Memphis. He would take Pernea and Jim and his trunk-load of papers, buy pack horses and ride to Washington town, by the Natchez Trace through Nashville. He had barely enough money. He would borrow more from Army friends and he would travel with good earth beneath him.

Meriwether Lewis was glad to go ashore. The river trip had been stifling and miserable—heavy fare, bad company, and no chance to forget his pains and achings. And he would be glad to leave the Chickasaw Bluffs, a village that was squalid and malaria ridden and lost in the trying dog days of late summer.

The Virginian visited the Army men at the little post. Sick, sick. All of them said he was sick, but sick or well, he would keep headed forward.

Maj. John Neely, Indian Agent for the Cherokee nation, a hard and discerning Army man, looked the

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Governor over, and, like the rest, judged him sick; but John Neely reckoned that if Meriwether Lewis was bound to make the long hot march through the Tennessee wilderness, that he would go along as escort, since Army men are brothers and each one is bound to be his brother's keeper. Major Neely went along.

At Memphis Lewis bought two pack mules and borrowed three cavalry horses from the Army post. Pernea and Jim loaded the mules, the luggage, and on the back of the larger mule roped the Virginian's trunk filled with papers and vouchers to be shown and confirmed back in Washington, and with manuscript for the neglected journals.

John Neely furnished his own horse and, besides a raincoat and a change of clothes, brought along two canteens full of whiskey for emergencies. Meriwether Lewis, still wearing his dress uniform, hitched on a brace of good pistols and slipped a razor-sharp bowie knife into his coat pocket.

The mounts swished flies and stamped as the Virginian spoke good-byes to the hospitable Army folks. He was a sick man. His skin was sallow and his cheeks suspiciously flushed, but the Governor of Louisiana had ordered the journey and he would carry it through.

Pernea, with dog-like fidelity, lifted his master to saddle. Then the others mounted and the four set out along the weatherworn road, east bound, Pernea and Jim leading the pack mules.

## NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER

In the still solitude of early October, the Natchez Trace waited in dust-splattered abandonment and the journey continued into a countryside of dense forests and ragged hills, Federal allotted Indian Territory wherein roving Red Men had been much corrupted by white man's lawlessness. At Memphis he had heard dark tales of highwaymen who plied along the Natchez Trace. What the Virginian dreaded far more was spies of the English—who were, according to rumor, circulating at every backwoods turn, though none appeared. Meriwether Lewis led forward. He would get to Washington and clear his name. He had fought a way to the Pacific and back, and now, even if he were a sick man, he was going on to Washington. No coterie of rotten-hearted underlings could brand him a thief, and get by with it, not while there was one gram's weight of life left inside him. . . .

Plodding hoofs and swaying packs gave slow cadence of assent. He would go on and on, with a whole heart, as Thomas Jefferson would have said. Maybe his health was gone. Certainly his money was gone. Here at thirty-five, Governor of all Louisiana, he was as poor as a church mouse.

Wind played through the crowded treetops, and murmurs rose, like the song of a distant ocean. Another autumn was about him. Oak leaves appeared lustrous and metallic, like the armor of olden knights, or the shields of forgotten warriors. Young hickories, with leaves turned lemon yellow, waved

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and tittered as if in a runic dance. . . . Sycamore leaves were heavy brown on their undersides.

Death would answer all the striving uncertainties of living. Death comes to men, just as it does to leaves.

During the slow wearing of these days, Meriwether Lewis had come to think well of death. In the years before, he had been striving and groping for life—an unending life; but sickness was building within him a new understanding. He was one now with the dying woods. The forest held a consolation, an understanding, that no mortal man, not even the great Thomas Jefferson himself could equal. Meriwether Lewis took comfort in the dying magnificence of the world of open woods.

Here and there a horse's hoofs scraped through fallen leaves. Winter would soon be taking the forests. Meriwether Lewis felt a strange burning sensation in his forehead. Pains like daggers of ice shot through his shoulders and back. John Neely named the ailment as long-gone malaria. Maybe it was. . . . Maybe it was the first touch of death. The Virginian was changing his notions of death, all at once. Now he rather wanted it, wanted it worse than he had ever wanted anything before—even more than he had wanted Theodosia Burr.

Life had picked him as helmsman of great adventure. Maybe death would be the greatest adventure of them all.

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Meriwether Lewis rode on, through white-golden October sunlight. The sky was intensely blue and seemed unbelievably close at hand. Jogging on, the roadway wound through jagged acres of boulders and blood-red clay. Lewis sensed a mighty roaring in his ears. Then the roaring shaped itself into voices, voices of men with whom he had marched, years and years ago.

The wilderness was wide. Days of slow travel were followed by more days of the same monotonous sort. The tired old road led on. From dawn until dark they rode and at night they camped by the wayside, cooked provisions over an open fire, and slept beneath the open sky. Meriwether Lewis had brought along buffalo robes for himself and for his men. Major Neely slept under a solitary pack blanket. The mounts fed along the way. Provisions were replenished at scattered taverns.

Occasionally a stolid-lipped frontier farmer, clad in buckskin or homespun, and armed with long-barreled hunting rifle, rode by, heading toward the town. Every few days a stage would pass, dust-splattered and rumbling along the rutted trail, clearing curves and dangerous inclines in giddy nonchalance, the driver clinging to a double-handful of reins for dear life as sweat-lathered horses floundered blindly on. Pernea and Jim traded riotous salutations with passers-along, but Meriwether Lewis stayed silent.

Jim and Pernea were plainly uneasy. During



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the day they let the pack horses tarry, and at night slept at a handy distance from the Governor.

Even John Neely, who had spent the better part of his fifty-two years in the open woods, watched over the Virginian with increasing caution. The Indian Agent was weary of escorting a sick man through the wilderness. He was resolved to ask a military escort for the Governor as soon as they could reach Nashville. This journey was no picnic, even with healthy followers. With a sick man along, it was next to impossible to cover more than a dozen miles a day.

Meriwether Lewis responded strangely to his malady. At starting, he had been too weak to mount a horse. Yet as the days followed he appeared to gain strength, and although he ate but sparingly and complained occasionally of pains in the head and chest, his determination to keep with the journey only increased; and he rode well enough, mounting and dismounting without Pernea's help.

John Neely noticed that the Virginian had occasional recourse to conversation, but that his sayings were lacking in continuity. Sometimes he told of old Army days, of forgotten maneuverings and marchings, inferring the company of various Army officers of whom Neely had never heard. He made gestures in Indian sign talk. Now and then he would give orders, as if he were directing a boat crew, and then he would gaze away into the forest and smile. Sometimes he would stop to gather in grass-heads or late-blooming wild flowers.

## NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER

The Virginian spoke pleasantly enough, and now and then made pertinent comments upon the journey, on Indian control, on various other topics of interest. He treated the Major and Pernea and Jim courteously. When the Indian Agent proffered his canteen, Meriwether Lewis drank but lightly of the liquor.

Presently, Meriwether Lewis began to show plain signs of returning health. His appetite improved, he rode better, but John Neely stayed uneasy. Now the Governor was touched with intense sadness and he slept but little. At night he lay for hours with eyes wide open. Sometimes he would rise up and walk forth into the moonlight or into the forest shadows, and once did not return until after dawn. The Virginian answered John Neely's protests with good-natured reassurance, claiming the discretion begotten of graying hair. The Virginian was almost gray now, which seemed unreasonable.

In one way the journey had been lucky. The gods of weather were good. For a week the four had ridden under clear skies. John Neely, who had his own notions of caring for the sick, had dreaded his illustrious patient's being exposed to rain, and he reckoned that fair weather in Tennessee October couldn't be expected to last indefinitely.

On the afternoon of the tenth of October, the journeyers met their first storm. Black clouds piled down from the north and the west. There was a far-off rumble of thunder and storm winds surged

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through the high forest tops. Then rain came in a downpour.

With the onslaught of the storm, Jim and Pernea met with troubles. Without unpacking, they had stopped for rest, and had left the pack mules and their own mounts to graze at the roadside, while Meriwether Lewis and John Neely had ridden ahead, in hopes of getting to handy shelter. When the thunder storm swept down, the mules took fright and broke for open spaces. The Negro went in stumbling pursuit, while the Creole ran to his master, there to report the sorry turn of luck.

Meriwether Lewis whirled his mount and ordered that all hurry in pursuit of the pack horses; for one of the beasts carried his trunk of precious papers—documents that were to save his good name. Whatever else happened, the papers must be saved.

John Neely had other ideas. The Governor was a sick man. This gadding about in a storm would be flirting with death, and if the Governor lost his life the papers would be of no help. John Neely himself would round up the strays, with the help of Pernea and Jim. In return for this he had just one request to make—that the Governor ride on until he came to a house where he could dry himself and take lodging for the night. It certainly wouldn't be far away—because now they were getting well on toward Nashville. The others would ride on and join him as soon as the pack mules were caught.

Meriwether Lewis rode on into the storm, alone.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE LAST MARCH

**R**AIN beat down upon him. A gust of wind lifted off his hat and hurled it to the ground. The Virginian rode on without stopping, unguarded from the silver shafts of rain. Bared treetops nodded in stoic acceptance.

The trail led on into a higher stretch of hills. Mud was as red as blood, and the raindrops stung like hail. The rain slackened, and he rode on through a valley crowded with bleak mist and forward into a shelf land clear of timber and guarded by high rock fences.

Here surely would be a house that would give him shelter. The trail had turned an abrupt V and he saw houses, a log cabin, low built and far-spreading and garrisoned by a picket fence. Smoke rose from the flat-rock chimney. Two little Negroes and a white child played in the yard.

Meriwether Lewis called to them, and the children sped to shelter. He pulled in his horse and as he slipped from the saddle, he saw that the western sky was clearing. He hitched his horse to the gate and walked lurchingly to the door. He was sick, and his forehead burned as if it were banked with fire. He called. No one answered.

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He knocked at the door. Then he saw that a woman stood there, a tall, angular mountain woman who stared at him as if in fear. He asked for a night's lodging. The woman's lips moved, but he could hear no word. She motioned him in, and pointed to a bed and chair. As the Virginian stepped into the odorous half-darkness of the room, the woman retreated before him, and Meriwether Lewis stood at the lone window and faced the west. Green gold sunlight shone on far lines of forests.

It would be a clear sunset, and the Virginian believed, somehow, that this sunset would be his last. . . .

In 1812, Thomas Jefferson wrote :

He [Meriwether Lewis] was in a paroxysm of one of these seizures of hypochondriac afflictions when his affairs rendered it necessary for him to come to Washington. He proceeded to Chickasaw Bluffs where he arrived on the Sixteenth of September, 1809, with a view of continuing the journey thence by water. Mr. Neely, Indian Agent of the United States with the Chickasaw Indians, arriving there two days later, found him extremely indisposed, and betraying at times some symptoms of a derangement of mind.

The rumors of war with England, and apprehension that he might lose the papers he was bringing on, among which were the vouchers of his public accounts, and the journals and papers in his western expedition, induced him to change his mind and to take his course by land through the Chickasaw country. Although he appeared somewhat relieved, Mr. Neely kindly determined to accompany and watch over him. Unfortunately at their

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encampment, they lost two horses, which obliged Mr. Neely to halt for their recovery, the governor proceeded, under a promise to wait for him at the house of the first white inhabitant on his road.

He stopped at the house of a Mr. Griner, who not being at home, his wife alarmed at the symptoms of derangement she discovered, gave him up the house and retired to rest herself in an outhouse, the governor's and Neely's servants lodging in another. About three in the night he did the deed which plunged his friends into affliction, and deprived his country of one of her most valued citizens, whose valor and intelligence would have now been employed in avenging the wrongs of his country, and in emulating by land the splendid deeds which have honored her arms on the ocean. . . .

To this melancholy close of the life of one whom posterity will declare not to have lived in vain, I have only to add that all the facts I have stated are known either to myself, or communicated by his family to others, for whose truth I have no hesitation to make myself responsible. . . .

TH. JEFFERSON.<sup>1</sup>

The first published account of Meriwether Lewis's death was written by the famed ornithologist, Dr. Alexander Wilson, who, traveling overland from Nashville to Natchez, learned the story from Mrs. Griner, mistress of the road-side tavern. The account appeared in the *Folio* of November, 1811, monthly magazine published at Philadelphia.

The next morning (Sunday) I rode six miles to the house of a man named Griner, where our poor friend Lewis perished. In the same room where he expired I

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson, "Introduction" to *Lewis and Clark*, Biddle Edition.

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took down from Mrs. Griner the particulars of the melancholy event, which affected me extremely. This house or cabin is 72 miles from Nashville and is the last White Man's house as you enter the Indian Territory. Gov. Lewis, she said, came there about sunset, alone, and inquired if he could stay for the night, and alighting, brought his saddle into the house.

On being asked if he came alone he replied that there were two servants behind, who would soon be up. He called for some spirits and drank a little. When the servants arrived, one of whom was a Negro, he inquired for his powder, saying he was sure he had some powder in his canister. The servants gave no distinct reply, and Lewis, in the meantime, walked backwards & forwards before the door talking to himself.

Sometimes, she said, he would seem as if he were walking up to her, and would suddenly wheel around and walk back as fast as he could. Supper being ready, he sat down, but had eaten but a few mouthfuls when he started up, speaking to himself in a violent manner.

At these times she said she observed his face to flush, as if it had come on him in a fit. He lighted his pipe and drawing a chair to the door, sat down, saying to Mrs. Griner in a kind tone of voice: "Madam, this is a very pleasant evening." He smoked for some time, but quitted his seat and traversed the yard as before. He again sat down to his pipe, seemed again composed, and casting his eyes wistfully toward the west, observed what a sweet evening it was. Mrs. Griner was preparing a bed for him; but he said he would sleep on the floor and directed the servant to bring the bearskin or buckskin robes which were immediately spread out for him; and it being now dusk, the woman went off to the kitchen and the two servants went to the barn which stands about 200 yards off.

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The kitchen is only a few paces from the room where Lewis was; and the woman being constantly alarmed by the behavior of her guest, could not sleep, but listened to him walking backwards and forwards, she thinks for several hours, and talking aloud, as she said, like a lawyer. She then heard the report of a pistol and something fall heavily on the floor and the words "O Lord"!

Immediately afterwards she heard another pistol shot, and in a few minutes she heard him at her door calling out, "O Madam give me some water and heal my wounds."

The logs being open and unplastered, she saw him stagger back and fall against a stump that stands between the kitchen and the room. He crawled for some distance, raised himself by the side of a tree, where he sat for about a minute. He once more got to the room and afterwards he came to the kitchen door but did not speak. She heard him then scraping the bucket with a gourd (dipper) for water, but it appears that this cooling element was denied the dying man.

As soon as day broke and not before, the terror of the woman having permitted him to remain for two hours in the most deplorable situation, she sent two of her children to the barn, her husband not being at home, to bring the servants. On going in they found him lying on his bed. He often said, "I am no coward, but I am so strong, so hard to die." He begged the servants not to be afraid of him, for he would not hurt them. He expired in about two hours or just as the sun rose above the trees.

He lies buried close by the common path with a few loose stones thrown over his grave. I gave Griner the money to put a post fence around it to shelter it from the hogs and from the wolves and he gave me his written promise that he would do it.



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I left the place in a very melancholy mood which was not much allayed by the prospect of the gloomy and savage wilderness which I was just entering alone.

Men have always questioned, and much questioning has been done in regard to Meriwether Lewis's tragic night at Griner's Stand. Where was Maj. John Neely? And why did he fail to join the Virginian as he had promised? What became of Pernea and the Negro Jim? Was Mrs. Griner's alleged fear of her ailing lodger convincing for her waiting hours before bringing help to the dying Virginian?

Nobody knows where John Neely spent the night. Perhaps he knew the slim capacity of the Griners' cabin, and so sent Pernea and Jim ahead with the recaptured mules, and seeing the storm finished, spent the night in the open, as becomes a strong son of the out-of-doors. Certainly it is only justice to say that the tradition of our early Indian service was high; that John Neely's official record was outstanding for integrity and attention to duty, a record backed by long service in the United States Army.

Next morning John Neely appeared at the lodging, took charge of the contents of the metal trunk and promised to see them properly delivered at Washington. The documents were received by the State Department, all in good order, and all protested accounts were straightway ratified and paid in full by the Treasury. The Indian Agent found

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that the trunk also held a tobacco box filled with beads and spearheads. He reported finding no money. He also saved the Virginian's journals of the voyage to the Pacific and delivered them in person to Thomas Jefferson.

Of Pernea, the Creole, we have two accounts, both hearsay. One to the effect that he went on to Albemarle and reported to Meriwether Lewis's mother details of her son's death; that the mother refused to believe the accounting and turned the informant from her home with a flare of temper. Nine years later, Helen Marks Harper, the Virginian's youngest half-sister, reported finding Pernea a laborer in Mobile, Alabama, and to have taken from him Meriwether Lewis's watch and rifle, without any good explanation of when or how the Creole had gotten them.

The Negro Jim was never accounted for.

Belief that Meriwether Lewis had been murdered either by John Griner, owner of the tavern, or by Pernea, or Jim, circulated through the countryside for years. Statute Records of Tennessee show that on October 7, 1810, Griner was brought before a grand jury at Savannah to answer a charge of having murdered Meriwether Lewis, Governor-general of Louisiana. The case was dismissed for lack of evidence.<sup>1</sup>

Probably the first statement of the possibility of Meriwether Lewis, having been murdered by John

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes, Commonwealth of Tennessee*, Vol. 123, pp. 1174-78.

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Griner was published in the Nashville *American* on September 6, 1891. The author was James D. Park, a correspondent at Franklin, Tennessee. The story took the form of an interview with a Mrs. Christina Ambrey, at that time a seventy-seven-year-old proprietress of a tavern in Newberry, a village in Lewis County:

Griner soon afterwards—i.e., after the death of Lewis—removed to the Western part of the State, and it was reported in his old neighborhood that he had bought a number of slaves and a farm, and that he seemed to have plenty of money. Before this he had always been quite poor.

In 1849, a committee appointed by the Legislature of Tennessee, to erect a monument to the memory of Meriwether Lewis, included this paragraph in its report:

The impression has long prevailed that under the influence of disease of body and mind, of hopes based upon long and valuable services not merely deferred but wholly disapproved, Governor Lewis perished by his own hand. It seems more probable that he died by the hand of an assassin.

Again, Major Meriwether Lewis Clark, first son of William Clark, in a letter to the Reverend James Cressy of Maury County, Tennessee, asked:

Have you heard of the report that Governor Lewis did not destroy his own life, but was murdered by his servant, a Frenchman, who stole his money and horses and returned to Natchez and was never afterwards

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heard of? This is an important matter in connection with the erection of a monument to his memory as it clearly removes from my mind at least, the only stigma upon the fair name I have the honor to bear.<sup>1</sup>

The weight of testimony, both recorded and traditional, is overwhelming in support of the but slightly varying accounts forwarded by John Neely, Alexander Wilson, and Thomas Jefferson.

Turning to Spece's *History of Hickman County, Tennessee*, one may read:

About 1807, the upper end of the bend (Skip's Bend) was settled by Robert Griner Sr. The next year he moved out on the Natchez Trace and built an inn near where the Lewis monument now stands. This was then in Hickman County, but it is now in Lewis County, named for Meriwether Lewis who committed suicide there in 1809.

The regularity of some of Lewis's official transactions was being questioned and he was hastening along the Natchez Trace en route to Washington City for the purpose of demanding an investigation when one night he came to Griner's Stand, accompanied by two servants, one white and one black. When Lewis reached the stand he had been drinking and was in such a highly excited state that his servants feared him and would not sleep in the room with him. During the night three shots were heard and when Lewis's room was entered, he was found lying near the door begging for water. He lived until noon the following day and was buried nearby, where a monument to his memory was erected by the State of Tennessee.

<sup>1</sup> Clark Voorhis Collection.

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More support was offered by the late J. H. Moore, a Hickman County lawyer of high standing:

On account of my long residence in a town not far distant from where Meriwether Lewis died; my intimate professional connection with the descendents of Griner, who was charged with the murder of Lewis; and my frequent discussion of the subject, not only with them but many of the oldest citizens of the locality, particularly with the old Negroes Pete and Lindy (slaves in Griner's family and present at Lewis's death) I deem it proper to submit the information I have obtained.

These facts will be conceded; that Lewis, while Governor of Louisiana with his seat of office at St. Louis, smarting under actual or imaginary injustice done him at Washington (said to have been the refusal to honor his draft for money to meet the necessities of the organization and government of the new Territory) started down the Mississippi River by boat, carrying with him many vouchers and public documents and expecting to take a vessel at New Orleans for the East. At Chickawar Bluffs (Memphis) he was led to believe that war with England was imminent. Fearing capture and above all the loss of his papers, on which he relied for his vindication, he procured horses at Chickasaw Bluffs and started over the Natchez Trace for Nashville, intending probably to go thence to Washington by way of Lexington or Louisville, Kentucky. He had two servants—one a foreigner (Creole French) named Perney or Pernea—the other, a negro.

Major Neely, the Indian Agent at Memphis, set forth to ride with them. Two pack horses were lost in an ensuing thunderstorm, and the party stopped to search for the horses; but Lewis wished to continue, so the others agreed to join Lewis at the next white

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man's house along the road, which was Griner's. Lewis reached this place during the afternoon of October 10, 1809, and that night received two or more gunshot wounds which caused his death early the next day, whether inflicted by his own hand, as I believe, or by another; is a question discussed at intervals ever since.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Moore interviewed the Negress, Lindy, who had been one of the children who played in Griner's yard, last surviving witness of the tragedy and found that her testimony closely corroborated Dr. Wilson's letter. The Negress, then in her eightieth year, and illiterate, had never read or heard of Wilson's version of the close of this magnificent career. The attorney quoted the substance of the Negress's story:—

Lindy stated that late in the afternoon the Governor rode up to the house alone and asked Mrs. Griner if he could stay for the night. She replied, "Yes, but there is no man here to take care of your horse." He answered, "That makes no difference, as my servants will be along in a short time." Soon thereafter two servants, one white and one black, came up on horses, leading two packmules. She said the white man's name was Perney and that he was a Spaniard or some sort of "furriner." The servants after removing the packs, took charge of the animals and repaired to the stables. The Governor at once began to walk up and down the yard talking to himself and muttering. His conduct was so peculiar that Mrs. Griner became alarmed and took her child and the two Negro children, Lindy and Pete, to the kitchen room which was several yards from the "Big House" as she called it.

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Moore, *Death of Meriwether Lewis*, Tenn. Historical Society.

## MERIWETHER LEWIS

Soon after Mrs. Griner and Lindy went up to arrange beds for the night. The Governor said that they need not prepare any bed for him, as he preferred to sleep on his buffalo robes on the floor; and they spread the robe down for him. The servants said that they were afraid to stay in the house with him as he had been acting strangely for the last two or three days and went to the barn to sleep.

The Governor did not lie down. He continued to walk—sometimes in the house and then in the yard continually talking to himself and repeating,—They have told lies on me and want to ruin me.

The children soon went to sleep, but Mrs. Griner could not and set up all night. Just before day all were aroused by the report of firearms. Two shots were fired in rapid succession. Immediately after, Perney came running to the house, the governor came to the door and asked for water. They all went together to the house and found the governor writhing with pain on the floor. Mrs. Griner asked, "Why in the world did you do this?" He replied, "They were telling lies and trying to ruin me." He was bleeding profusely from a wound in the body near the heart. He lingered . . . until one o'clock when he died.

Mr. Moore made the summary:

After a residence in Hickman County of more than three score years, and after practicing law in that county and adjoining counties for forty years I have yet to find in any of them any considerable number of persons who thought that Governor Lewis had been murdered.

Another widely known barrister, Elijah Walker, a native of Hickman County, judge of the Fourteenth judicial circuit of Tennessee from 1849 to

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1861, and of the Tenth circuit from 1870 to 1873, intimately acquainted with the Griners, described them as an honorable and law-abiding family and altogether beyond just suspicion.

Facts have become dim with wilderness distance; certainties effectively lost in the mist of dead years. In any event, Meriwether Lewis, of Albemarle, had lived magnificently. He had led this greatest of American explorations high-heartedly, and fearlessly and through it built a lasting monument to the eager, sunwashed gallantry of the American frontier.

In 1849 the Legislature of Tennessee voted the sum of five hundred dollars to build a fitting monument to the memory of Meriwether Lewis. The site chosen was that of his grave, near the old landmark of Griner's Stand, on the homeward trail, seventy-two miles west from Nashville on the old Natchez Trace.

The monument was built simply, a white granite shaft, twenty feet high, four feet in diameter at its base and eighteen inches at its tip. The west face carries the inscription:

### MERIWETHER LEWIS

Born near Charlottesville, Virginia, August 18, 1774

Died October 11, 1809, aged 35 years.

[South face]

An officer in the Regular Army—Commander of the Expedition to Oregon, in 1803-1806—Governor of the Territory of Louisiana. His melancholy death occurred



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where this monument now stands, and under which rest his mortal remains.

[East face]

In the language of Mr. Jefferson: His courage was undaunted; His firmness and perseverance yielded to nothing but impossibility; A rigid disciplinarian, yet tolerant as a father to those committed to his charge; Honest, disinterested, liberal, with a sound understanding and scrupulous fidelity to truth.

Forest and sky, sun and stars serve him fitting epitaph.

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*Jefferson's Letters to John Page*.

*Youth of Thomas Jefferson*, by J. E. Cooke (Redfield, 1854).

*Thomas Jefferson-Architect*, by S. F. Kimball (Riverside Press, 1916).

*Jefferson at Monticello*, by Hamilton Wilcox Pierson (Scribner, 1862).

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